

*Improve governance  
and quality of the forest management  
in protected Mediterranean areas*

## Thematic enlightening n°1

### Communication and consultation of local stakeholders



*Partners : PNR of Alpilles, Region of Murcia, Generalitat Valenciana  
Leader : PNR of Alpilles (Louis-Michel DUHEN, CRPF PACA)*

## Table

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Identification of stakeholders and knowledge of their roles, missions, expectations, representations, etc.</b>	<b>2</b>
Experience of the PNR of Alpilles	2
The ONF's experience on the Ventoux massif	2
<b>Consultation of the key stakeholders of the territory</b>	<b>3</b>
PNR of Alpilles: sociological study and interactive terminals	3
Region of Valencia: public consultation about Wildfire prevention plan	5
Region of Murcia: consultation of populations during the preparation of the Master plan	6
<b>Governance and communication</b>	<b>7</b>
Good communication for successful governance	7
Province of Taranto: drafting of a management plan, presentation and discussion.	7
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>8</b>

## Introduction

The governance of forest areas needs a diagnosis phase, which should not detract from the human and socio-economic dimension of the territory. Aware of this need, several partners have undertaken, in the framework of the project, to address the civil society stakeholders in order, on the one hand, to better communicate about their activities and, on the other hand, to better take into account the territorial dynamic and the role and expectations of the various stakeholders involved in the territory.

## Identification of stakeholders and knowledge of their roles, missions, expectations, representations, etc.

In all the frame documents prior to the establishment of a policy and the governance method that will be associated to it, the descriptions and physical inventories are often favoured in respect to the social context. They are, it is true, easier and quicker to put in place.

But, good governance cannot operate if we do not know the context, the organisation and role of the structures involved, the current practices, the stakes of the territory and how they are perceived.

## Experience of the PNR of Alpilles

The PNR of Alpilles has looked at the issue by undertaking what could be called a “Governance diagnosis”.

### Identification of the stakeholders: “Who does what?”

We felt that it was important to describe the role of the stakeholders with an indication, for each, of their role, and any responsibilities they may have in their field of expertise (see details of deliverables: DVD or website [www.qualigouv.eu](http://www.qualigouv.eu)).

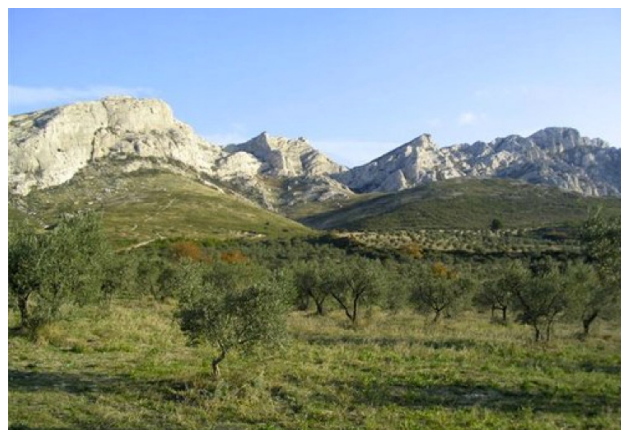
As regards the general public, it seems interesting to know its representations of the forest and its expectations (see “Sociological study”, page 3).

## Regular review of interventions in the Alpilles forests currently

To properly analyse the governance processes, it seems interesting to describe the different types of actions that are taking place in the forest, detailing the decision-making process and the course of action. Only the process leading to the completion of the wildfire prevention works has been fully described.

## Present challenges on the massif

An initial identification according to expert opinions of the challenges has been carried out. But, it would have been desirable to pursue a more detailed analysis on the relative weight of each stake, according to the stakeholders, and to provide a prospective endeavour on their future evolution (provided within the framework of the development of the future Forest Territory Charter).



*Photo 1: The Alpilles (Provence, France), a massif with fragmented and fragile forest areas, but clearly present in the collective conscience.*

## The ONF's experience on the Ventoux massif

The ONF has taken on-board the structure of the table for identifying the stakeholders involved in the territory developed by the PNR of Alpilles, it adapted it to its work context and released it during the fifth seminar on Mont Ventoux.

## Consultation of the key stakeholders of the territory

It is interesting to go back over all of the various partner initiatives in the field of communication and information because they contain all of the specific informative items.

### PNR of Alpilles: sociological study and interactive terminals

#### Objectives

The sociological study has two main goals:

- Collecting data relating to the perception and expectations of residents and users of the forest massif of Alpilles.
- The synthesis of the data in order to define the guidelines of the “governance and communication strategy”.

#### Questions to be asked

Semi-structured discussions have been held mainly to answer the following questions:

- What are the perceptions of the forest among the inhabitants and users of the massif of Alpilles?
- What are the main expectations of the inhabitants and users of Alpilles regarding the forest areas?
- Which values are related to the forest, and more particularly to the forest of Alpilles?

#### Different parts of the interview

The main topics addressed during the discussion were the following ones:

- Design of the forest and natural areas (see Figure 1 on page 2): representation of the nature and the forest area, name and characterisation of woodlands, the values related to the forest, perception of the evolution of the forest of Alpilles, evolution of the vegetation cover, evolution of the landscape, identification of the values that underpin the identity and development of the territory.
- Identifications of practices, visits and conflicts of use, challenges faced by the forest today for developing the territory.
- Perception of management actions of the area,

knowledge and vision of the role of the PNR.

- Perception of risks and the prevention of wildfires: perceived risks, risks experienced, reminder of wildfire risks, prevention and wildfire management.

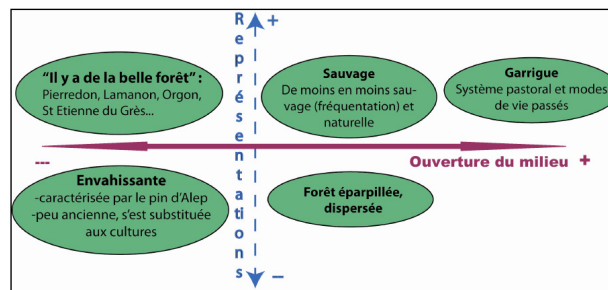


Figure 1: Characterisation of forest areas in the Alpilles Mountains by the persons surveyed.

#### Two innovations

##### “Walking” interview

The Arènes office has been chosen especially due to the originality of the approach it proposed, namely, that the semi-structured discussion be carried out while walking.

We ask the person being interviewed to guide the interviewer to a place of their choosing, about which they have something to say and in particular:

- A well-liked, favourite place.
- A place which best characterises the forest area from the point of view of the interview.
- A place which most represents the risk of wildfire in the territory.

##### Mind mapping (see Figure 2 page 4)

The instruction is simple: on a plain sheet (or base map available if needed), position the main municipalities of Alpilles, the various components of the territory (habitats, forest areas, crops, water courses, etc.), areas which have burned or even areas at risk.

Mind mapping allows to address several aspects:

- The situation of the forest on the territory, its location, landmarks for the person being interviewed (knowledge of the PNR, Perception of the remarkable character of the territory, etc.).
- The way in which the area is organised (interweaving of the forest and the inhabited areas, etc.), the place and importance of the forest.
- What the forest is called (hill, massif, scrubland, etc.).



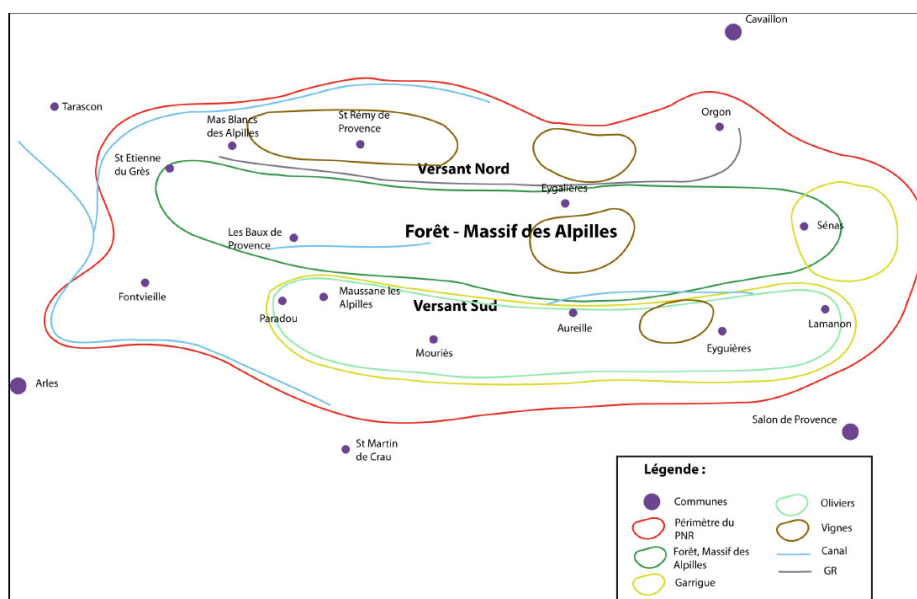


Figure 2: Synthesis of the “mind maps” carried out in the framework of sociological survey.



Figure 3: Mobile interactive terminals.

## Interesting results for a limited cost

The total cost of this study, supporting 15 semi-structured interviews of people representative of the various “communities” of Alpilles, amounted to 13,963 euros. An intermediate presentation, with the official representatives of these groups, was organised in order to enrich the results. The final conclusions are as follows:

- The governance in the territory is perceived as rather good, but seems to be unfolding far from the stakeholders and inhabitants who are not directly integrated in it.
- Two stakeholders are perceived as having a pre-eminent role in relation to forest: the ONF (presence of agents) and the PNR of Alpilles (role of preventing wildfires).
- The Park’s actions, relating to the valorisation, landscaping and development of the massif are currently less visible, whereas this corresponds to a strong expectation. The personnel of the PNR are appreciated, but are mainly considered as “producers of expertise and studies”.

The PNR is often cited as an indispensable management and governance tool with an overall (“facilitator”) vision. However, a better osmosis with town councils is desired.

If the forest areas seems to be sufficiently protected, there seems to be a need to develop the association of the population in managing wildfire (accurate and regular information, consultation, etc.). A formal

request for dialogue with a wider range of audiences is emerging.

It seems desirable to set up a consultation scheme, which schedules the different phases and consultation times over time, in coordination with the project management process or the scheduling policies (studies, implementation of action plans, decision-making stages, implementation, monitoring, etc.).

Through the answers, the PNR is referred to (invited to adopt) a clearer positioning on the roles that they want to develop: coordinator of the stakeholders in the wildfire risk management and forest work, conciliator of the various uses (without being a stakeholder), organiser of consultation and governance and, finally, a driving force for the development of the territory and the guarantor of the construction of a new balance between tourism, urbanisation, agriculture, conservation of biodiversity and wildfire risk management.

## Establishment of interactive terminals to gather the opinions of the general public

Two mobile interactive terminals have already been put in place in a rotating basis in different strategic points of the Park. The visitor answers a random set of 10 questions plucked from a list of 60 questions. This questionnaire, intended to both educate the visitor and to raise their expectations in respect of forest management, was also available at the Park’s website.

The interactive terminals have received a real interest from the “general public”. On the whole, they have



also consolidated the data collected in the framework of the sociological study, confirming in particular a certain lack of public knowledge concerning the impacts of wildfire, but also the intervention methods and the Park's missions. The link between cutting and prevention is not clearly established, mechanising the work has been badly received. Efforts in the field of communication, organisation and education therefore remain to be done.

This concerns an innovative and interactive method to collect expectations and the perception of local populations on the forest across a broad enough sample. It's an interesting complement to the sociological study, which favoured a limited number of in-depth interviews with targeted stakeholders.

## Region of Valencia: public consultation about Wildfire prevention plan

### Increasingly comprehensive plans

The various plans (managing natural resources, combat...) have been synthesised and compiled into a single document: the Wildfire prevention plan. Generally, the area of application is the same as for the PORN (*Plan de ordenación de los recursos naturales*, a territorial planning document on a micro-regional scale), therefore often more extensive than that of the Natural parks.

These plans include all the technical data, but also an "analysis of conflicts" (between hunters, herders, arsonists, etc.) and a study of the "socio-economic uses".

### Public consultation of the first version of the plan

After the technical phase (diagnosis, infrastructure plan and causes prevention plan), the second step is to consult local communities and the general public. The Plan is widely distributed in the official bulletin of the Ministry's website, in the Town Halls, the provinces headquarters, the representative associations, the local press and in meetings. Requests are primarily issued by the communities (65% for the Regional park of Puebla de San Miguel). They mainly concern fire-break areas (47%) and much localised aspects. In the example of Puebla de San Miguel, 53% of the requests have been taken into account; they generally resulted in an improvement on the localisation of interventions.

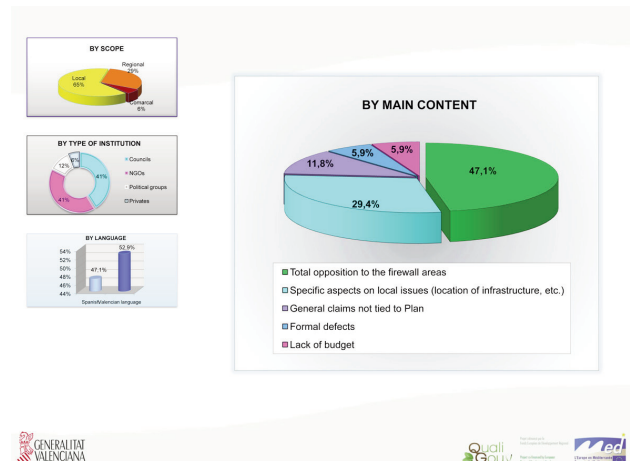


Figure 4: Analysis of responses to the public consultation launched in the context of drafting the Wildfire prevention plan for the Regional park of Puebla de San Miguel.

### Constitution of a management committee representing the various social groups

In a park already equipped with a Wildfire prevention plan, the Natural park of Serra of Espadà, a Management and administration committee (*Junta Rectora*) was formed in addition to the existing Steering committee. It is composed of representatives from the 19 villages, farmers, private owners, herders, hunters, environmental groups, universities, etc. It gives an important advisory opinion, representing the expectations of the different local social groups on Park management.



Photo 2: Consultation meeting in the context of drafting the Wildfire prevention plan for the Regional park of Puebla de San Miguel.

## Region of Murcia: consultation of populations during the preparation of the Master plan

On the occasion of the study prior to establishing the Master Plan (socio-economic and shared environmental development tool), the involvement of the local population in the overall protection and development of the territory process has emerged as a necessity.

### Sociological study on the perception of the territory

A sociological study on the perception of the context by the local population was carried out by means of collective interviews and individual surveys. These interviews were conducted by Park agents.

Twenty-five semi-open interviews, customised according to the five profile categories (local population, entrepreneurs, new residents, scientists and institutions) have helped to outline a few proposals. Each group comprised five people as well as external experts.



*Photo 3: Village of Puebla de San Miguel, where the participatory approach has been conducted in the framework of the establishment of the Master Plan by the Region of Murcia.*

### Surveys on the thematic

718 surveys were then conducted in Gebas, Fuente Librilla, Alhama de Murcia and Librilla (the 4 main centres of population inside and around the perimeter of the Park) focused on various thematic such as promoting the Gebas landscape, knowledge of the environment, perception of the protected landscape, and even the situation and prospects for economic development.

They demonstrate how these different local stakeholders are attached to this territory, for which they want more development through knowledge and tourism. This study supplied a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) divided into themes. Again, the civilian population took part in this preliminary phase to define the action plan.

### Workshop to select the priority actions

Forty-five people divided into six working groups according to their technical, scientific or political profile (farmer, owner, resident, entrepreneur, hunting expert, decision-maker and staff of the municipalities, environmental technician, local development officer, Consular Chamber representative and Park staff) attended a social participation workshop. All the profiles present in the area have been consulted in order to ensure the representativeness and quality of the governance

These six working groups discussed the following topics:

- Social motivation.
- Natural and rural heritage.
- Cultural heritage.
- Productive system.
- Infrastructures.
- Institutional management.

This participatory methodology is directly inspired by the EASW (*European Awareness Scenario Workshop*) method.

Although we might regret that the number of participants in this workshop was not very high, this work led to new action paths being identified and, conversely, other actions being eliminated. In fact, one of the first jobs for the technical team, made available by the Park and the Region of Murcia, had led to the development of a preliminary proposal of 131 measures. The contribution of working groups enabled forty-five measures to be selected, for which concrete actions were detailed (motivation, timetable, means, expected results, etc.). Finally, the participants were able to vote for the measures which they considered as priorities (nine votes per participant).

## Governance and communication

### Good communication for successful governance

It seems that good governance passes through the understanding and acceptance of the choice of management by the biggest number of people affected. The expected positive effects concerning these individuals were as follows:

- A better understanding of the project's relevance.
- A broader understanding of the consequences of the proposed management.
- New more environmentally friendly practices in these areas.
- Better acceptance of management practices.
- Possible contributions on their part to the costs of this management.

A good use of communication in a broad sense seems to be one of the necessary conditions for successful governance.

### Province of Taranto: drafting of a management plan, presentation and discussion

The authoritative decision to create a Park in the *Gravines* (Region of Puglia, Italy), followed by a politic opening the possibility for landowners to extract themselves from it, originally led to a starting situation rather difficult to manage in terms of governance.

It was decided to write a management plan and submit it to all the people concerned to gather their opinions. This plan was presented to all people concerned in order to take into account their opinions, in particular thanks to two questionnaires<sup>2</sup> that allowed to learn more about the perception of local population regarding to the Park.

### A difficult context

The relatively poorly prepared creation of a park in the *Gravines* (deep canyons), desired by the Region of Puglia and entrusted to the Province of Taranto, was poorly received by the local population, whereas private agricultural and forestry land is significant there.



*Photo 4: The Gravines (Region of Puglia, Italy), an exceptional site, but where the establishment of a Park has been affected by the prior absence of governance structures.*

First of all, there was a misunderstanding. The populations understood that the area of the Park was to be limited to the area occupied by the *Gravines*, whereas a peripheral buffer zone was required, but this was poorly explained in the approach.

More pedagogy in the approach would have been beneficial to understanding the decision to extend the Park beyond the actual *Gravines* site. People with little experience in this field do not spontaneously understand the interest of taking into account the multiple relationships between the *Gravines* and the peripheral areas.

Due to the opposition of the owners, as a solution the Region of Puglia contemplated giving them the opportunity to exclude their lands from the perimeter of the Park. To avoid the latter from shrinking to nothing, an important communication/awareness-raising process was implemented.

#### Notes :

1 - *Nota bene* : It is the only Natural regional park in France that closed this competence.

2 - Available in the DVD of deliverables attached to the present book. You can also get it by contacting the AIFM: [www.aifm.org](http://www.aifm.org).



## Conclusion

A good use of communication in a broad sense is one of the necessary conditions for successful governance. However, the exchange should not be confined to “sugaring the pill”. It must be reciprocal, constructive, and allow the structure leading the project to grasp, and take into account, the state of mind and expectations of local stakeholders.

To achieve this, knowledge of the social context and also that of current forest practices is essential. Tools, adapted to the context, are necessary to carry out this diagnosis work with minimum strictness and effectiveness. The QUALIGOUV project has allowed us to test some of these tools and to identify the benefits, the weak points and, in some cases, the conditions in which each one can be reproduced.

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14, rue Louis Astouin 13002 Marseille - France - Tel. : +33 (0)4 91 90 76 70 - Fax : +33 (0)4 91 90 71 62 - Email : [info@aifm.org](mailto:info@aifm.org) - Website : [www.aifm.org](http://www.aifm.org)