

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

Thematic enlightening n°7

Valorising Mediterranean timber and structuring a local chain of stakeholders



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Introduction: timber in the Mediterranean forest

Wood is a material with multiple qualities. Made from the mineral elements of the soil and the photosynthetic action, its potential for constitution by solely natural processes is almost infinite.

What is more, the transformation of the atmospheric CO₂ into solid organic molecules constitutes a carbon trap thus participating in the regulation of the greenhouse effect.

Technologically, the properties of wood vary greatly depending on the species. However, most Mediterranean trees can be a source of usable products for valuable uses (construction, carpentry, cabinetmaking, etc.) and not only as fuel or raw material (paper, adjuvant of industrial processes, etc.).

On the other hand, wood is barely used now in the Mediterranean region, while the raw material is often present in sufficient quantity that the relating technical nature is not inaccessible and there is considerable momentum in the construction sector.

The reasonable use of this resource must in addition be a generator of an economy and local forest and timber employment.

One of the main blockages lies in the absence of structuring in the chain of stakeholders from the forest manager up to the one person who will deliver a building with a significant proportion of timber material.

The QUALIGOUV project will have been the opportunity to achieve a demonstrative project bringing together all the intermediaries needed for the construction of the multi-purpose room in Mazan (a municipality in the Department of Vaucluse in France). It involved a pioneering initiative in France in the context of a public contract.

Lessons can be learnt from this achievement in the perspective of giving it a transferable character.

Direct marketing of timber by the ONF

The traditional mode of marketing timber in blocks and upright has a number of advantages (in particular its simplicity) but also the disadvantage of making a “bulk” sale inevitably grouping products of various qualities.

In the Mediterranean, where the differences in the value of the different categories of timber from the same plot are lower than in other regions, this sales system undoubtedly leads to a certain commonality and to retaining the least valuable use for an entire batch.

Which is why it is important to be able to separate the different categories of wood from the forestry use phase in order to put the most uniform plots, and those suited to a wide range of uses (carpentry, construction, packaging, wood-energy, etc.) up for sale.

The sorting operation conducted by the ONF needs a use of timber “en régie” (complete management of the operations) by the forest owner. This process has several advantages:

- Constitution of homogeneous plots. The sale of fine-tuned products is an undeniable factor of economic value added (unlike bulk sale).
- Promoting the emergence of products that can be associated with a forest terrain (e.g.: “*Cedar from Ventoux*”) and hence shorter consumption circuits.
- Better control of operating conditions (respect for environmental, seasonal clauses, etc.).

However, it is not devoid of drawbacks for the same owner:

- Need for cash advance to bear the operating costs.
- Ability to technically mentor the work contractor responsible for using the timber.
- Risk of wood degradation once cut and stored awaiting a buyer.

The exploitation “*en régie*” (complete management of the operations) can be performed independently of a particular timber order. In this case, the forest owner will present a stock of timber plots to potential buyers.

The project of multi-purpose room in Mazan

In the case of the QUALIGOUV project, there was a conjunction of expectations between the ONF who wanted to **promote Mediterranean timber locally**, and the municipality of Mazan through its **eco-friendly project of a multi-purpose room**.

Contacted by the ONF, a design office specialising in timber construction enabled the essential link between producer and user.

Using local timber requires a dynamic double:

- having timber producers in a position to propose clearly identified plots;
- benefit of a local emulation around timber construction and its benefits.

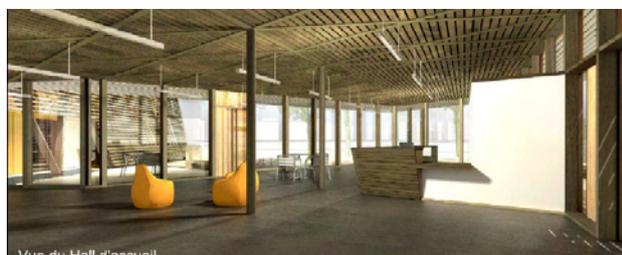


Photo 1 : View of the multi-purpose room project (images Cabinet Gaujard) It is here that takes all the importance from the craftsman who on the one hand, controls the techniques for the timber construction and on the other hand, has the sufficient power of conviction to take the decision away from the contracting authority as to the option of a timber building.

Associated with the building's architect, the design office specialising in local timber will support the contracting authority throughout the project.

Its role as a link between the various stakeholders is essential:

- dialogue with the forest manager for the optimisation of the resource in local lumber (research and adaptation of specifications of the products to be delivered),
- translation into category of products (Black pine and Cedar for framing, Mountain pine for cladding),

– exchanges with the contracting authority to profit from, both technically and aesthetically, all the potential of the local timber,

– submission to the carpenter (and the sawmill) of a set of precise specifications respecting the technological requirements.

The Mazan project wanted to be demonstrative in respect of the use of local wood; the assembly should therefore provide for the municipality to control its supply circuit.

To do this, the direct purchase of timber for producers by the municipality, the contracting authority of the project (assisted by the Community of Municipalities of Ventoux) proved to be most appropriate solution.



Photo 2 : Direct exploitation ("en régie") with wood sorting by the ONF in the municipal forest of Bedoin (Mont Ventoux).

This device has had the advantage of giving a centralising role to the contracting authority who, in addition to selecting its contractor and architect, was also assured of the quality and the origin of the raw material.

In order to comply with the provisions of the public contracts code, the community of Mazan used an

appropriate procurement procedure.

This mode of consultation helped to expand the field of investigation among different local timber producers (in this case, the ONF for state timber but also the municipality of Bedoin), and then to engage in a dialogue between the candidates and the contracting authority in order to ensure the adequacy between need and the capacities of providers.

We also here the decisive role of the timber design office in the link between the contractor and the suppliers.

Another approach could be that the municipality of Mazan requiring the specific use of Mediterranean species in its supply contracts for the multi-purpose room project. We can imagine that this would have exempted the municipality from the follow-up tasks of processing logs (see below). In this case, it is very likely that this request for the supply of framing, cladding and other local timber parts would be pointless. In fact, there is no standardised offer for Mediterranean tree species such as the Cedar, Black pine or the Mountain pine, which is a limitation to the proliferation of this type of project.

In the absence of a constituted sector, the construction of a building with Mediterranean timber remains largely dependent on the organisation of a specific supply chain.

The contracting authority became the owner of the raw material of the future multi-purpose room and should then ensure of its processing into construction parts.

To do this, the municipality of Mazan issued a public works contract for the construction of the multi-purpose room in which it has incorporated the plans and prices defined by the architect. Through this contractual link with the carpenter, the municipality, its contracting authorities and architect continued to have control over the use of the timber material desired.

Proceeding in this way requires being able to find a carpentry company able to process the timber required

by the contracting authority. But this method also has the advantage of promoting local employment and consolidating the fabric of timber processing companies in a short circuit system ("*local timber - local companies - local construction*").

For the Mazan project, the carpenter chose to appoint, through a sub-contract, the services of a sawmill responsible for making the first cuts of logs.

The first returns of experiences with the sawmill and the carpenter are encouraging.

Strong points

- The quality of the Cedar wood of the Atlas and Black pine is considered to be very satisfactorily with the timber working little when drying.
- For the same two species, the waxed aspect after sawing is visually interesting.
- After drying, the humidity rate drops to 12-13%; thus, the weight of the wood fell sharply after drying. This concern of users therefore becomes less during installation (also mechanised with lifting equipment).
- There are the usual withdrawal slots without any consequences on the quality of the products. The appearance of nodes is limited.
- Fine and regular increases confer an excellent quality and a nice aspect to the sawn wood.

Negative points

- For the Cedars, the dimension of the logs is often insufficient to be able to obtain several products with a big enough size structure. Part of the Cedars was too short to be used as a frame or structure, were also sawn in cladding.
- Unlike the Black pine and Atlas cedar, the Mountain pine, for small sections of sawn wood has a tendency to deform when drying.

Conclusions and prospects

The project of the party room of Mazan illustrates the possibility of supporting a construction project based on a local resource also encouraging the use of proximity.

Three key elements of success have emerged:

The strength of proposal and support for the architect and the design office specialising in timber.

The capacity of the forest owners to propose homogeneous timber plots after sorting during the use (more or less severe depending on the intended uses: structure, framing, cladding, etc.).

The central role of the municipality for timber supply, the processing and supply of parts to the company responsible for the construction.

The link “*a timber plot for a type of use*”, the limitation of intermediaries from production until final use generate product traceability.

This identity given to the local resource is conducive to a more virtuous use of Mediterranean wood in the construction and, by the same token, a real added value for the products.

This experience confirmed the qualitative potential of three species which are widespread in the Mediterranean region: the Black pine, the Atlas cedar and, to a lesser extent, the Mountain pine. This gives it a demonstrative character and must give local stakeholders the confidence to engage in a timber construction project.

Nevertheless, the prospects for development depend mainly on the downstream application. Information and awareness-raising work in the direction of the projects leaders in order to use the local productions is indispensable to obtain true momentum.

If this is not about considering the systematic use of timber in a Mediterranean region, or construction is generally based on various materials, timber, with its technological, ecological and aesthetic qualities, must be able to find a prominent place in the construction plans of tomorrow.



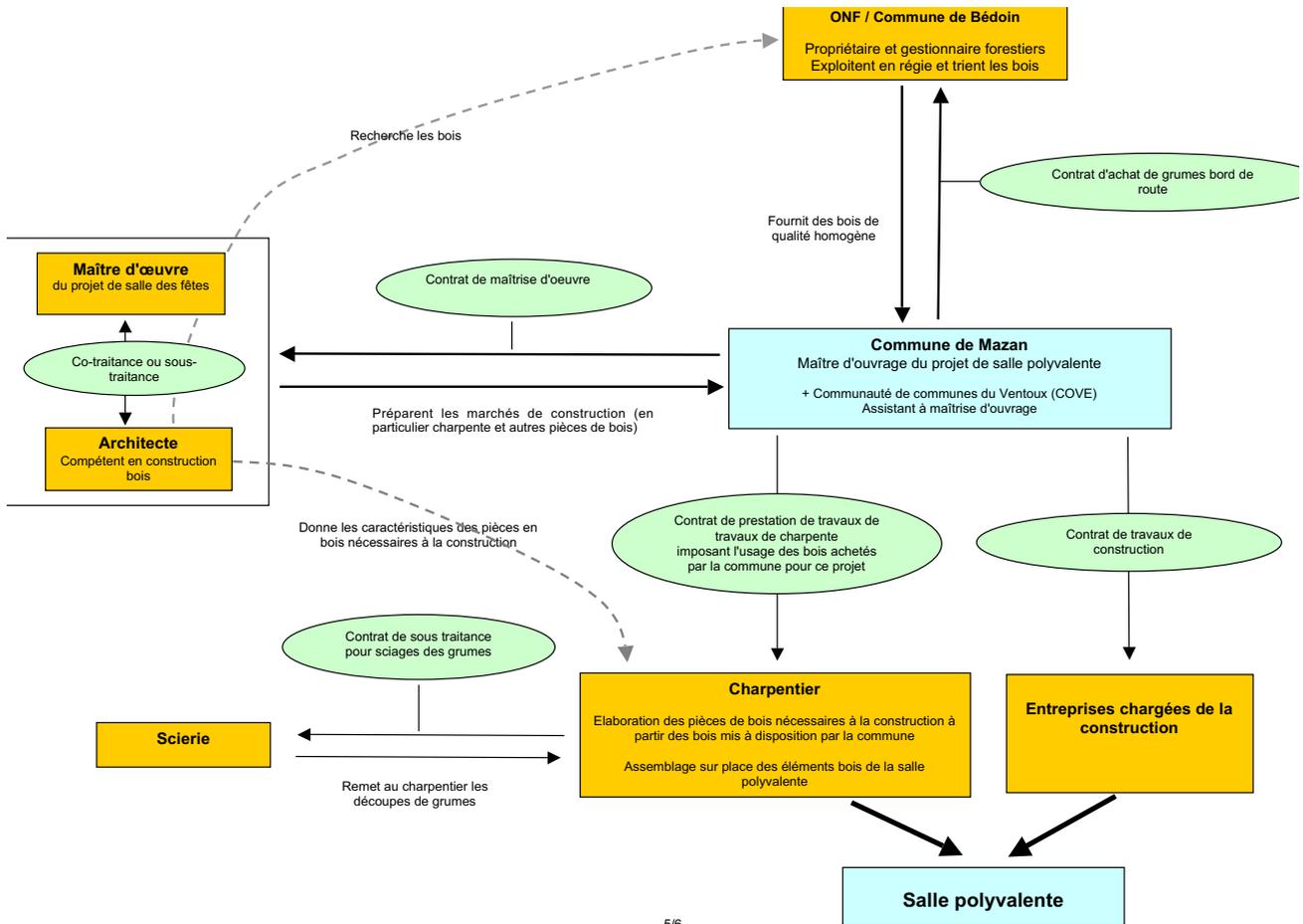
Photo 3: Cedars forest of Bedoin, visited during the second Mediterranean Forest Week, an event to which the QUALIGOUV project has been closely associated.

Annex 1 : Overview of the project for the construction of the multi-purpose room of Mazan in timber from Ventoux

Synoptique du projet de construction de la salle polyvalente de Mazan en bois du Ventoux



Annex 2 : The organisational chart below summarises the functional and contractual links between the different stakeholders of the project.



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