



## Local governance about nature in France: NGO's to the test of data transparency

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# The local governance about nature in France :NGOs confronted with data transparency

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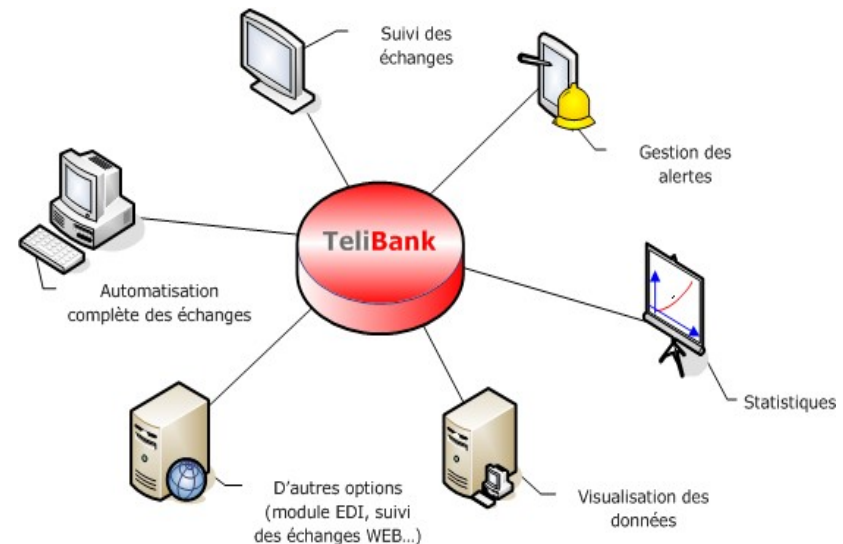
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# Background

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- Framework: Knowledge has more and more importance in the context of the increase in the number of policies about biodiversity conservation. Since Rio 1992, many initiatives with the aim of producing, managing and making available data about nature have been implemented one after the other.
- In France, data on nature are coming from private and public institutions among which local associations occupy a large place. Nevertheless, it should be noted how uneven the producers of data are, and how obstinate the process of rationalisation led by State is.
- What exactly are these data? The naturalist community agrees on this definition: it comes from an observation made in the field, listed with the name of the taxon, its place and date, the name of the observer.
- Through the action of various institutions, state and regional public governments have been working for about 40 years to make data cumulative, comparable and available. It has carried out a dynamic which links the aspects of governmental power and knowledge about nature.
- The Aarhus Convention points out the turn from a government where secretiveness plays a significant role to a kind of governance by transparency.

# Approach and methodology

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- **Research topic:** rationalisation and dissemination process of naturalist data through the implementation of SINP and the conflicts it has raised
- **Research question:** what are the reasons for the trouble brought out by data format and circulation?
- **Hypothesis 1 :** data are complex and multidimensional; there are various conceptions of data according to the sense given by actors and by their use.
- **Hypothesis 2:** in a background framed by disclosure rights, control of the ways of dissemination of data has become an important concern for associations.

# outline of the presentation

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- **First section:** approach and methodology of the investigation
- **Section 2:** The SINP as an instrument of standardisation of the production of data
- **Section 3:** from transparency to control of the data uses: conflicts and issues about data dissemination
- **Conclusion**

# Field analysis and methodology

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- socio-anthropological approach
  - to follow-up on the implementation of SINP at the national and regional scale
  - ethnography of a naturalist association of volunteers+ interviews with heads of other local NGOs.
  
- It is important to link studies at the national (SINP) level with those at the regional and local level (associations)
  
  
- Field surveys in the following regions : Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Franche-Comté, Poitou-Charentes

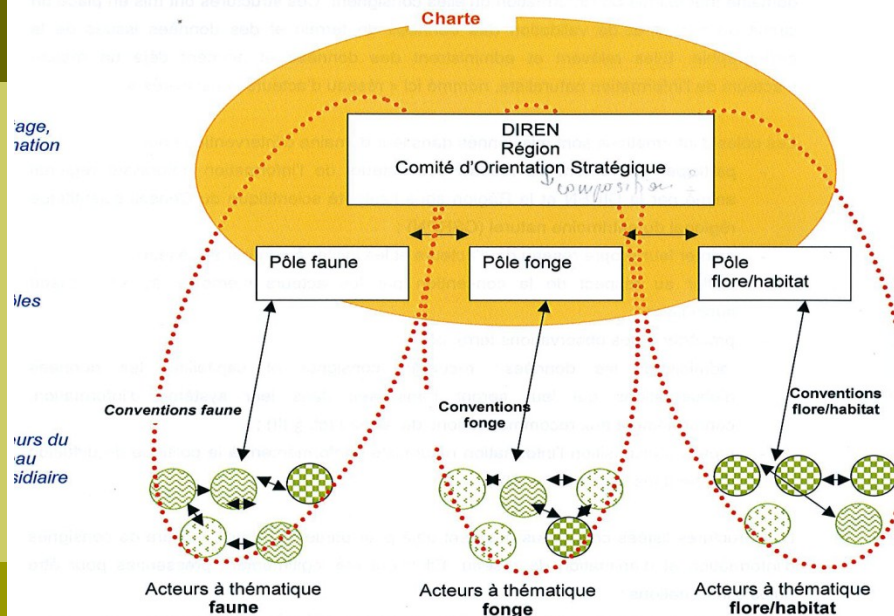
# The information system on nature and landscape (SINP)

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- The SINP is a standardisation tool, to improve data quality, reliability and accessibility. This procedure leads to the removal of data from its context through the building of common systems of reference. This leads to Disembedding the data from social relationships.
- ✚ The process of standardisation has brought about a new conception of data; objective information defined in a conventional way and easily found by using a data base
- The SINP is a scheme based on two levels of governance :
  - at the national level, it is in charge of defining both methodology and a common frame of reference
  - at the regional/local level, it is in charge of setting up an organization that encourages data access.
- The implementation of SINP has provoked resistance from associations

# Tensions about data circulation. The network of information from naturalists (RAIN) in the North Pas-de-Calais area.

Figure 1 : organisation du réseau d'information



- What is the aim of the RAIN ? The aim of RAIN is to organize knowledge for this region by connecting data producers and users.
- Coercive measures : public authorities considered that data produced using public funds must be made public because of the obligations arising from the Århus Convention
- Several associations have disagreed with this decision: this raises questions about who owns the and has the right to use the data.



# Access to data under certain conditions

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The building of data categories : a procedure to control the access to information

- To keep data under control, a data manager creates categories according to their type. For example there are different kinds of data :
  - synthesis data
  - aggregated data at local level
  - raw data are kept secret.
- Associations providing data claim to have various kinds of skill and experience, which make them better able to interpret data than organisations, such as consulting firms. These are not familiar with the context and the history of the land.

The raw data represents the association's capacity of expertise as well as their legitimacy.

# Conclusion

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- ❑ Ongoing data rationalization shapes the way nature is considered, which is more and more reduced to its quantitative components in the name of efficiency and new public management principles.
- ❑ Within a context dominated by increased commoditization of data and by the reduction of the budget allocated by public authorities, the access control to raw data has become a major issue for associations.
- ❑ This dynamic of data rationalization increases the influence of public authorities and the most important associations. It raises the following question: What role can the voluntary associations play in this local governance, now reduced to its technical dimension?