# *"Application of territorial intelligence focused on the cultural heritage and of the reaffirmation of territorial entities:"pays" in France. The case of Couserans (Ariège-Pyrenees)"*

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**Abstract:** Within the framework of a total Territorial Intelligence approach focused on the territorial identity called "pays", we studied the limits and the ambiguities of this notion. The belonging feeling to a specific area ("pays") has stirring effects for regional institutions, that's why it is necessary to develop a identity feeling around this notion, feeling which is deeply linked to the heritage and the culture. We found, through an investigation realised on the «pays de Couserans», that if a very strong local identity linked to a common history and heritage does exist, the notion of "pays" is quite unknown and its action field and attributions are not really understood. The entity "pays", a concept all in nuances that is necessary to handle with precaution, because it also can carry exclusion. But because it is also anchored since unmemorable times in our collective memory, the "pays" can carry a lot of meanings. Territorial unity "pays" seems to be a relevant vector in the installation of projects of sustainable development within the framework of concerted and participative processes of Territorial Intelligence.

## INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of the new team research S3IS (Sciences and Engineering of Strategic Information and Intelligence), from University of Paris-Est (Marne-la-Vallée), and of a cooperation in the course of formalization with the "syndicat de pays", we are setting up a total Territorial Intelligence approach focused on territorial entity called "pays". These quite new territorial entity is born with the two laws of planning territory (called Loi Pasqua and Loi Voynet) in 1995 and 1999.

We plan to study the “pays” in a “global” and constructivist approach (Mucchielli, 2005) of Territorial Intelligence and analysis of the complexity (Morin and Le Moigne, 2007) in an interdisciplinary prospect centred on the sciences of the information and the communication. This study is base on the contextualisation, the interactions and the representations of the actors through a participative research. It is also developed according to the rules recommended for the development of a Catalyse's observatory, which is means "associating the actors and the community of a territory with the mutualisation of information and their cooperative exploitation"(Girardot 2005). The local level appears as the scale of effective action to approach the problems connected to the sustainable development. It is at this level that it is possible to implement global, intersector-based and participative solutions (IRFA, on 2006). It is through a research participative action which we intend to study the "pays de Couserans". To do it we decided setting up a study of diagnosis and evaluation with the local population: inhabitants, representative actors of the culture and the heritage, the politics, the economic and industrial actors.

This communication is the first stage in the construction of a complete study of the "pays de Couserans". As we suggest acting on the scale of the "pays", we shall present first of all in this communication the specific context of the assertion or rather the reaffirmation of "countries". Indeed, much more than a new creation, it is about the reaffirmation of often very ancient identical areas. We can speak about revenge of the history, about the local identity and about the collective memory on the egalitarian administrative apportionments of 1790 (Communes and departments). More than 10 years after the law of February 4th, 1995 of orientation for the arrangement and the development of the territory, how is perceived this "country" which can be understood as a frame geographically and historically confined, when at the same moment economic, social, cultural, political and symbolic relations are gathered?

These studies will be made through one meadow investigates where we shall estimate the anchoring of the notion of "pays". Prelude to a more deepened inquiry this stage will allow us to prepare questionnaires, interview forms, and the specific methods of work for the time of our study in the observed territory.

## THE TERRITORIAL SCALE "PAYS"

### A process of Territorial Intelligence

We will present in this communication the specific context of the assertion of the "pays".

This study is base on the contextualisation, the interactions and the representations of the actors through a participative research. It is also developed according to the rules

recommended for the development of a Catalyse's observatory, which is means "associating the actors and the community of a territory with the mutualisation of information and their cooperative exploitation"(Girardot 2005).

**"Pays": new territorial scale, a space of proximity**

Within the framework of a territorial action development, the local level seems the effective scale of action to tackle the problems related to the sustainable development. It is on this level that it is possible to set up intersector and participative total solutions [IRFA, 2006]. However, the local level covers several territorial scales: the "region", the "department", the "canton", the "commune", the "community of communes"...

In the current recombining of the territorial organizations, the "pays" is making its come back. (Fénié, 2000). Its success is coming from several factors. At first, the "pays" is an opened structure, which gathers true actors. Then it is based mostly on a spatial entity that is not artificial; product of the history and the geography, it presents a space to human scale. Indeed it is about the reaffirmation of often very ancient identical areas. Much more than a new creation we can speak about revenge of the history, about the local identity and about the collective memory on the egalitarian administrative apportionments of 1790 (Communes and departments). The term "pays", coming from the Latin *pagus* "rural countries", is originally a small territorial unit which we can easily cross by foot in one day, we live there, we know there, we make business, it is most of the time the same landscape corresponding to a relatively homogeneous natural environment. Those small countries that split the territory in the time of harnesses were so much reduced unities born from the relief, the relations and the common customs. (Fénié, 2000).

**The laws relative to the creation of "pays"**

The law of February 4th, 1995 of orientation for the arrangement and the development of the territory, called "loi Pasqua" put the first milestones for the creation and the re-creation of the notion of "pays". The law of June 25th, 1999 of orientation for the arrangement and the sustainable development of the territory (Loi d'Orientation pour l'Aménagement et le Développement Durable duT: LOADDT), called "loi Voynet", constituted a second determining stage in the organization of the territories of projects.

This law makes of the country a real territory of projects, based on a local will. It also aims at establishing solidarity between rural spaces and urban spaces. Finally the law of July 2nd, 2003 "town planning and environment" (*urbanisme et habitat*) operates a sort of synthesis between the "loi Pasqua" and the "loi Voynet". The "pays" is defining as a presenting territory "a geographical, cultural, economic or social cohesion, in a basin of life or work", double reference that gives big latitude to the local elected representatives. The notion of charter introduced by the "loi Voynet" is kept, as well as the obligation to create a council of development.

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More than 10 years after the LOADT, France is now widely organized in countries ("pays"): on January 1st, 2007, 41% of the French people live in one of 334 recognized countries and 73% of the metropolitan surface is concerned. The regional distribution of countries is rather heterogeneous: three regions are totally covered with country ("pays") or almost (Bretagne, Basse-Normandie and Limousin), in seven other regions the part of the population living in a country ("pays") exceeds 70% of the regional total; on the contrary, the Ile-de-France counts no country ("pays") and Corsica only one[4].

According to the DIACT[5] the "pays" possesses four main characteristics:

- The "pays" has to result from the base, has to appear from a feeling of membership. He answers this way, in the ascending logic.
- He has to, if necessary, express a solidarity between city and rural space, it is thus here the idea of a coherent and opened up territory which is proposed.
- The territory must be structuring on projects in the future and not on its capacity to get subventions. In the elaboration of these projects the elected representatives are invited but also the civil society, the "pays" is a space of projects. It really improves the local development, an endogenous logic and implies a refusal of the state assistance, a pooling of resources as material as immaterial.
- Finally, the "pays" has to be a reference space for the organization of public utilities, by realizing local aspiration. It is thus the logic of services that prevails.

The "pays" is thus indeed a territorial entity completely suited to the development of local actions. Based on the feeling of membership of nearness and solidarity, the "pays" seems to be a coherent, accessible and legible entity at every level. Nevertheless, more than 10 years after the law of February 4th, 1995 how is this entity perceived? It is one of the questions that we trying to answer in this publication.

## Ambiguity of the notion

The term of "pays", if it is not new, indicates very heterogeneous entities. It is collectively used to name a small territory, on the scale of a canton or inter-communality, by referring mostly in the name of the main commune: the "pays" in that case is synonymic of geographical nearness.

It can also indicate vaster and more identical territories, marked by a common history and a culture (le pays Basque, le pays Bigouden, le pays d'Auge…). The "pays" can be thus

[4] At January 1, 2007**.** "L'état des lieux des pays", published on line by "Entreprises Territoires et Développement".

[5] "Délégation Interministérielle à l'Aménagement et à la Compétitivité des Territoires" ex DATAR.

collected as a frame geographically and historically confined, where at the same moment economic, social, cultural, political and symbolic relations are combined

However we saw that the "pays" is originally a small territorial unit and it's from this relatively reduced initial dimension corresponding to the lived space of the exchanges and the usual relations, which is born the second meaning of the word "pays". It's the ground to which one is attached, by the feelings, the one of the ancestors, the fathers (German vaterland, English fatherland). (Fénié, 2000). It's "la *patrie*"(Fatherland), "le pays" where each one have its "payse"("the women how come from the same "pays"""). From "la *patrie*" to the nation, there is only one-step that was crossed at the end of the XVIII$^{th}$ century[6], the "pays" merging at this moment with the "Etat"(state) term.

In the plural countries substituted themselves at this moment there the nation corresponding to the power of a State, the current national countries. The terms of "country", "nation" and "State" become then almost synonymic.

The concept of the "pays" consequently becomes something more wide but also vaguer. Since we speak about "European countries " which gather several countries or States, but also of " Basque countries " who joins together several territorial units: there is a Basque nation living on both sides of Bidassoa, united by a common culture and for about 60% of the population, by the same language. There is a French Basque country ("pays"), and a Spanish Basque country ("pays") (Euskadi), become autonomous community in 1978, the militant Basque dream about one " big Euskadi " reunited going to Adour.

Moreover the "pays" term can have a general direction even vaguer with names like "*les pays du soleil*", "*le pays of the rugby*" or also "*du cassoulet*". The "pays" term; became more confused, used by professionals of the communication, in the great distribution in particular, it became support of promotion for products "authentic" "*terroir*" evoking a fuzzy and malleable reality used according to needs.

## THE POWER OF "PAYS"

### Gathered around the "pays"

We thus propose to analyze the territorial unity "pays" in a process of Territorial Intelligence. However, to be able to act on this local level, the populations should be gathered around an unifying concept, and this concept would seem to be territorial identity. Indeed, "the feeling of proximity", "to be proud" of its area, has a positive influence on the assets that people recognize with its region". (Dupoirier, 1998). Mobilizing effects in favour of the regional institutions and their policies are produced by the fact of feeling be a part of this area. Correlatively, this feeling of membership is today in the heart of the process of territorial development and developing the feeling of membership becomes a leitmotiv for the territorial communities ". (Gwiazdzinski, 1997). The majority of research on local identity show "to be defined compared to a place is especially to refer [...] to a

[6] The battle of Valmy (September 1792) where were federated the participants resulting from various provinces around a new concept: the fatherland (*la patrie*) in the broad sense. The volunteers came from all over France to be fought cry of "*vive la Nation*!".

cultural heritage" (Chevallier, Morel, 2007) In the concept of "pays", the concept of culture is essential "it is not the economy or the policy which is more important but the feeling of cultural belonging". (Dupoirier, 1998).

The culture and the heritage take part in the development of local identity (Lacour, 2007), their roles, founded on values belonging to the territorial community, are used to consolidate the collective identity and are in coherence with the economic, human and environmental development of the territory. It is thus necessary to determine indicators for the "pays", to refer above all to a concept of cultural identity.

### A strong identity, but an unknown "pays"

This ambiguity which lies in the term, led us to wonder if, in spite of a territorial identity strong and anchored well in the population, the concept of "pays" as understood by the LOADT, was known? That's the reason why we kept two main assumptions for this pre-investigation: 1. there is an identity feeling extremely strong, and 2. the concept of "pays" is little known.

## FIELD OF THE STUDY: WHY THE COUSERANS?

### The scope of study

#### *Geography*

This approach centred on the countries is particularly well adapted to the "pays of Couserans", the current district of Saint-Girons (Ariège). Couserans corresponds to the basin of Salat (affluent of the Garonne) i.e. to the convergence of 18 valleys out of two poles close, distant of 2 km: Saint-Lizier (capital of the Gallo-Roman city) and Saint-Girons (economic center). This country of 27 980 inhabitants gathers 95 communes for a surface of 1 639 km².[7]

We chose Couserans for several reasons:

- here more than anywhere else the "pays" is not founded on a recent and artificial entity but was founded on the limits d'un "pays ancien", a Gallo-Roman ancient "pagus" become Carolingian county then ecclesiastical diocese until 1790.
- its history and its geographical characteristic allow to explore the specific problems for the concept of "pays" in a specific environment. (A rural environment but converging on an urban pole: Saint-laps/Saint-Lizier.)
- with its 18 valleys which are as much of "micro pays", it seemed to us interesting to wonder on the daily living reality of the "pays of Couserans".
- it is the region of origin of one of both authors, who has already worked on the formation of the border in central Pyrenees and has contacts with the main actors of this territory.

[7] Density: 17 habitants/km² - City the most populated: Saint-Girons (6 254 inhabitants)

***History***

At the end of XIX$^{th}$ century, Couserans was an overpopulated country on which the small agricultural plots of land did not allow the families to live, that is why the inhabitants had to show a lot of imagination to find activities to survive. And so some became bear leader, peddlers of vanilla, stone scythe, mirror, others were made itinerant "home distillers".

Having lost the major part of his inhabitants[8], notably with the drift from the land, Couserans benefits now for some years of a slightly positive migratory balance. Major opportunities of development of the "pays" live on one hand in the wealth of its natural and cultural heritages and on the other hand in the potential of job creation of the local economy. However, the peculiarities of the relief infer a subdivision of the territory. These natural difficulties handicap and slow down the exchanges, and create strong heterogeneousness in the possibilities of access to the services and to the activities.

**The "pays de couserans"**

Territorial entity "Pays de Couserans" was recognized in 2002, the contract of "pays" signed in 2004 indicated a council of development, the "Syndicat mixte du Pays de Couserans". Its characteristic is to be structured as an association 1901 (there are only nine of this type) with a committee of development (CDPC). It includes 77 members distributed in six thematic schools: socio cultural dynamics, tourist economy, natural resources and spaces, sport dynamics, services and solidarity, and general economy. Benefiting from a consequent budget, it benefits of a big freedom. In 2006, the CDPC participated in more than 100 meetings; it is present in the committees of piloting of the "pays", in the steering committee of the Fair Exhibition, within the PNR and in departmental and regional economic and social "councils".

To present completely Couserans it is necessary to note the existence of "microcountries" in the perimeter of the "pays de Couserans" it is about 8 associations of local authorities. Finally, we can also notice that four communes do not belong to any association of local authorities: Aigues-Juntes, Montardit, Montesquieu-Avantes, Lacourt.

Couserans is thus a "pays" which includes strong senses of identity and very localized identical developments. An essentially rural space, which is going to allow us to develop a reflection on the notion of "pays". Finally the third axis of the charter of development of the PNR[9] insists on the fact that is necessary to: "Improve the cohesion of the territory around an affirmed identity by developing the factors of identity of the "pays". If the stakes of the "pays" are so outlined around the assertion and the federation of a strong cultural identity, our thought about the notions of identity and the knowledge of the "pays" seems

[8] The population of the Ariège was almost divided by two in century, certain communes of Couserans lost, over the same period (on approximately 1870-1970), until 80% to a 90% of their inhabitants. The process continued in the 70s. In spite of an important mortality due to an old population, the departmental demography stabilizes, to see increase slightly, since about twenty years, due to "neo-countrymen's" arrival and return of retired people (Chandivert, 2005).

[9] Project of regional Natural reserve Ariège the Pyrenees Central - Schedule of conditions "Agenda 21 of the project of Regional Natural reserve d'Ariège the Central Pyrenees". March 2005.

essential and must be handled at first. So we are going to become attached in this second part to the way to study the "pays de Couserans". How is it perceived by its inhabitants, whom represents the notion of "pays", which are its real or supposed powers? Is it perceived as a real and well-defined appropriate entity? Is it perceived well? Is the notion of "pays" a reality? Thus, our reflection on the identity notions and the knowledge of the "pays" seems essential and must be treated in very first place.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE INVESTIGATION

We thus decided to proceed to a pre-investigation, which will allow us:

- to prepare questions for a vaster investigation bearing into the "pays of Couserans".
- to determine indicators which return to objective or subjective memberships to the "pays".
- to observe the knowledge of the entity "pays".

## FRAMES

### *Geographical frame*

Regarding the geographical space of the "pays" we shall become attached to the limits defined in 2002 during the creation of the "pays de Couserans".

### *Contractual frame*

The interview took place according to a pre-established plan:

- Presentation of the inquiry (directs, clear but brief)
- Interview proposed at once
- Negotiation of the conditions of the interview if it is not possible at the time of the call (the hour, the place)

Context of the interview

- The interview took place by telephone, in the workplace or at the person.
- The interview was around 10 minutes long.

## PREPARATION AND DATA PROCESSING

As a pre-inquiry we used a preparation and simplified data processing. First of all, we identified the variables: qualitative, quantitative, nominal…. Once identified, each variable of the investigation has been subject to codification. Then we postponed the information on the investigation in a summary document (data table), which was seized on an Excel spreadsheet. Concerning the processing of data we conducted essentially a flat sorting however some of our analysis are sort of crossover.

## RESULTS ANALYSIS

This pre-inquiry is an introduction in the constitution of a more detailed inquiry. We wanted to release the main subjects connected to the identity of Couserans, the knowledge or the misunderstanding of the notion of "pays" and its various attributions, and the axes in which the persons think that it has an impact. This pre-inquiry also allows us to determine closed questions with pre established questions. We carried out this pre-investigation between September and October 2007. The results allowed us to check our assumption and to bring them nuances.

## PERCEPTION AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE COUSERANS

Question: what means for you the word "pays"?:

50% of people asked answered us that it was "there where we had been born". 30% answered us France. These answers indicate us that it will be necessary to present differently this question to be really able to determine if there is indeed confusion of the terms. Indeed, the only answer there where we were born is not enough to clarify this confusion of the terms that we anticipated. Even if happened several times (30% of time) that the persons feel the need to clarify "Couserans". This question will thus have to be accompanied with a sub-question which will ask to clarify what the persons really understand by the word "pays" when they answer "there where we were born".

Question: of which territorial structure feel the closest (the one who determines your identity):

30% answered the Ariège, 20% Couserans and 20% the commune. It thus seems that people asked feel a rather strong identity towards the region, on the other hand the answers "Couserans" and "my commune" arrives equally with 20% what would tend to indicate that these two territorial unities represent a real support of identity. Nobody quoted the "pays de Couserans".

For our future inquiry, those answers are going to allow us to refine these questions by asking questions closed by the type "do you feel closer to the region, to the Commune, to the "pays de Couserans?"

Question: what evokes for you the term "Couserans"?:

This question allowed us to notice that the answers while being rather diverse finish anyway to make appear main lines. For 20% of people asked it is "my pays", for 20% it is "there where I live", for 20% it is the "mountain" and for 20% it is "my roots". It seems that the term "Couserans" evokes an identical strong feeling concerning essentially roots and territory of origin. On the other hand, it is to note that for 20% of people asked, Couserans gets closer to a natural space: the mountain.

It will thus be necessary to propose closed questions for a more precise meaning of the word Couserans: the place where we were born for example, but we also need an opened question, because there also we can note that the notion of Couserans is not inevitably likened to a territory of birth or life but to an environment.

Question: what mean for you the terms " pays de Couserans"?:

When we arrive at this question, we realize that if there was no difficulty answering the previous question, this one raises problem. More than 20% of people asked answered us that they did not know what that meant. We had then, representing approximately 20%, answers like "a little known structure", "very difficult to realize" or "no major realizations". Those persons likened at once the term "pays de Couserans" to this recent territorial entity. What is interesting, it is that it is at once negative or depreciating qualifiers that were associated with it.

In this question, we see although, on one hand there is misunderstanding of the term which generates no opinion, and on the other hand when the term is known it is associated at once with reducing or negative terms.

**THE IDENTITY**

Question: According to you, what constitutes the identity of Couserans?: A geographical frame, a common history, traditions, a cultural identity, an economic identity, the ground of my ancestors, an opposition to the other structures, a zone of refusal

Among the answers to these six propositions, we found very strong tendencies for the most part of them.

Regarding to the identity feeling, nearly 90% of the questioned people answered us that according to them, Couserans was a geographical space of tradition and cultural identity. Only 40% of them assimilated it to an economic identity. That seems due to the reduction of the basins of work and the fact that nearly 40% of the questioned people had to leave the area to find a work. We heard often the comment: "I fortunately find a work in the region".

We had also asked if Couserans "is an opposition to other structures" (suggested by C Bourret born in Couserans, who always believed to feel this concept like a strong element of this territory). Indeed, it comes out from this pre-investigation that 80% of the questioned people identify without hesitating Couserans as a zone of refusal.

All made a point of specifying what this feeling represented for them, and to 80% they quoted an opposition to Foix (The prefecture and the siege of the General Council), sometimes with many arguments related on the subsidies, the services and the economic policies. A person clarified us "an opposition to Foix it is certain but not in Paris nor even in the Ariège which is anyway an artificial creation" Others quoted the Ariège. Moreover a person who sells local products clarified us that if he was sometimes obliged to clarify Couserans in the Ariège it was only to replace Couserans geographically, because for him he is "selling products of Couserans" before anything else, in opposition with products of the region Midi-Pyrénées or of the department. Nobody quoted Paris or France. Among the persons who answered "no", a person clarified us that it was "a distinction instead of an opposition".

This notion of refusal seems very important for *Couserannais* and it will be necessary to create it under the same shape in the wider questionnaire by asking to clarify to what it opposes according to them. Also, it will be interesting to verify if this notion exists in the

other territorial unities "Pays" in France and if we find this particular notion at the other territorial levels.

## THE "PAYS DE COUSERANS"

Question: There is since April, 2002 a "pays de Couserans" steered by a council of Development of the "pays de Couserans" which is a non-profit organization. Did you know it? Do you know its action?

This question allowed us to verify one of the hypotheses that we had formulated in introduction.

Concept of "pays" is known by 60% of the questioned people. What seems less clear, it is the attributions and the action fields of this "pays". Indeed the very large majority of the people which knew the structure, told us that they didn't not know its actions (70%).

Question: its action is according to you first: a dynamics socio cultural? A tourist economy? A management of natural resources and spaces? A sports dynamics? A management of the services and the solidarities? A management of general economy?

Comment: to elaborate this series of questions we took back the thematic questions of the council of Development of the "pays de Couserans".

It is this question which allowed us to know in which domains people asked thought that this structure had an action. The answers which were given to us show well that its supposed or real actions are not the same for everybody.

When one asks in which field "le pays" has a priority action, 40% of the questioned people think that it has an action in socio cultural or tourist dynamics. Less than 30% of the questioned people think that it has an action on the natural stock management and spaces, in a sporting dynamics and the management of the services and solidarity and less than 20% answer that it has an action on the management of general economy.

Those answers show well that the concept of "pays" is understood above all in the cultural and tourist field.

Question: according to you, do the "pays de Couserans" have a future?

To the persons who answered yes to the question "do you know this structure", we then asked if they thought that this structure has a future. 80% of those persons answered us yes. It will be necessary to refine this answer by asking then in which domains this structure would have according to them a future to be able to compare with the series of the question 9.

Question: is the level "pays de Couserans" useful?

To all the persons, whatever they answered yes or not to the fact of knowing the "pays", we asked then if this territorial level seemed useful for them. 90% of them answered us yes, the others "do not know".

That we know or not the structure, the scale of "pays" thus seems to be important. Is it because through this naming "pays" we find this first notion of country, this ancient country expensive to our roots, this "country/premises" versus the "country/state" there? It seems essential to leave such a question to be able to study this notion of "pays" and be able to estimate in which measure it is suggestive for the inhabitants of "countries".

## CONCLUSION OF THE ANALYSIS

The results of this pre-inquiry allowed us to verify our hypotheses and to bring it nuances. If it indeed seems that Couserans possesses a strong identity, on the other hand the notion of "pays" seems to be known by 60% of people asked. What seems less clear it is the attributions and the missions of this "pays". The fact that more half of the people asked know the "pays de Couserans" reveals a certain paradox as we supposed it. Because if there is a strong identity around a "historic country" and geographical, a great majority of the persons quote the same historic episodes, the same symbols and the representations; the "pays de Couserans" which has nevertheless the same geographical space is little known. Known or not, the scale "pays" seems to be important. Is it because through this name "pays", we find this first concept of "pays", this old "sweet" country with all our roots, this "pays/local" versus le "pays/nation"?

The identical feeling seems to be strong it is thus possible to take up project which uses this feeling as anchor point. As we have just seen it, the identity is the culture, it is the reason for which it is necessary to work on the cultural and patrimonial factors, what joins well that we developed on the beginning of this article.

## CONCLUSIONS

This pre-inquiry was realized as prelude in a wider study, which will allow us to analyze the essential elements necessary for the territorial diagnosis of "pays", to improve their axes of development, their respective strategies and problems relative to each of the territories to have a general view of the "pays".

Within the framework of a territorial proximity action development on the territorial scale of the "pays", we saw that it is necessary to develop an identity feeling around this concept. We also noticed that the fact of membership feeling, has mobilizing effects in favour of the regional institutions and their policies. We also discovered that the identity indicators related to the concept of "pays" are closely related on the heritage and the culture because in this concept "it is not the economy or the policy which comes precedes but the feeling cultural belonging" (Dupoirier, 1998).

The result of this pre-investigation allowed us to check our assumptions and then to bring nuances. If it seems indeed that Couserans has a strong identity, on the other hand, 60% of the questioned people know the concept of "pays". What seems less clear, are the attributions and the action fields of this "pays".

This case study in parallel enabled us to define belonging identity and cultural indicators, which will be a base to set up an observatory of the "pays" according to the method Catalyses and to determine the identity feeling of a territory. Finally, identification of these

indicators could be a support with creation of a cultural diagram of the "pays" based on the development of the heritage.

We can note in the territorial communication a movement that seeks to re-register or to register these territories at the same time in a last history and a collective project for the future. This step seems completely in adequacy with the scale of the "pays".

However, Guy Di Méo warns us against certain risks: "the territory makes emerge the social identity of the groups and that can be the best thing, but also carrying exclusions; behind its identity rampart, the territory can be also locked up in a closed vision whereas it must be integrated into multiple scales".

The entity "pays", a concept all in nuances that is necessary to handle with precaution, because is anchored since unmemorable times in our collective memory. Territorial unity "pays" seems to be a relevant vector in the installation of projects of sustainable development within the framework of concerted and participative processes of Territorial Intelligence.

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