



HAL
open science

How the local governance system is influenced by the creation of an observatory: the OSER 70 experiment.

Alexandre Moine, Philippe Signoret

► To cite this version:

Alexandre Moine, Philippe Signoret. How the local governance system is influenced by the creation of an observatory: the OSER 70 experiment.. In International Conference of Territorial Intelligence, Oct 2007, Huelva, Spain. p. 204-218. halshs-00516505

HAL Id: halshs-00516505

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00516505v1>

Submitted on 26 May 2014

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

“How the local governance system is influenced by the creation of an observatory: the OSER 70 experiment”

Alexandre MOINE, Philippe SIGNORET

Alexandre MOINE, Philippe SIGNORET

Université de Franche-Comté

32 rue Mégevand

25030 Besançon Cedex

France

alexandre.moine@univ-fcomte.fr

philippe.signoret@univ-fcomte.fr

Abstract: The new tools now available to territorial intelligence cannot but take into account the various time and space scales. Setting up a socio-economic observatory - operating as a regional network- allowed us to state again and outline more accurately the issues pertaining to the notions of territory and observation. Our study remained constantly focused on a major preoccupation: the actor should always be at the heart of a local project and governance system.

In France, regional development has changed. It no longer depends on a centralised decision-making process imposed from Paris but is now based on the recognition of local territories. They are many, and not only the administrative “*régions*” and “*départements*”. They are constantly overlapping, interpenetrating, merging or separating. Traditional administrative divisions become less important than local stakes and priorities or even a wish to collaborate.

Nowadays a wide variety of actors play a role in the process of elaborating, deciding and implementing development programs in a context characterised by multiple space and time scales.

Observing the territory involves methods which gather and present data in many different ways. Surveys of local dynamics may take into account several observation spaces. Most spaces are predefined but some of them are changing or do not even exist yet. As information is too often considered a mere commodity, understanding and using it at best has become the major issue, a precondition to building a territorial intelligence system.

However, the tools used by the various local operational or decisional bodies to observe and understand how territories change hardly seem to progress. Good governance undoubtedly implies an efficient processing of any information describing the space along different time scales and allowing to grasp the intertwined interventions of multiple actors within interpenetrated scales.

The “*Agence régionale de développement*” -Regional development Agency- in Franche-Comté -ARD-FC- is implementing a real strategy: identifying, organising, publishing and enhancing data and knowledge thanks to a mutualisation of regional means and resources so as to strengthen exchanges and collaboration. The ThéMA research group, in a partnership with the Société I@D informatique, was chosen by ARD-FC to design a tool capable of including the dimensions of time and space, of taking multiple points of view into account, of sharing and assimilating high-quality data. All these capabilities had to be developed within a framework allowing a large number of actors to observe their territories from the very specific point of view of economic development, an essential theme. This new tool is known today as the “*Observatoire socio-économique en réseau de la Haute-Saône (OSER 70)*”.

This contribution aims at describing a method which allows an assessment of the governance existing before the observatory is created. Appraising the data used by the various actors and the expected indicators allows a better understanding of the organisational context in which the upcoming observatory is going to develop within a territory and existing practices.

1. FROM TERRITORY TO OBSERVATION TOWARDS BETTER GOVERNANCE

1.1. Territory, observation and governance

When it comes to territorial development and policies, and whichever theme is dealt with, several concepts are related to the issue of observation. Territory, observation and governance are therefore closely linked.

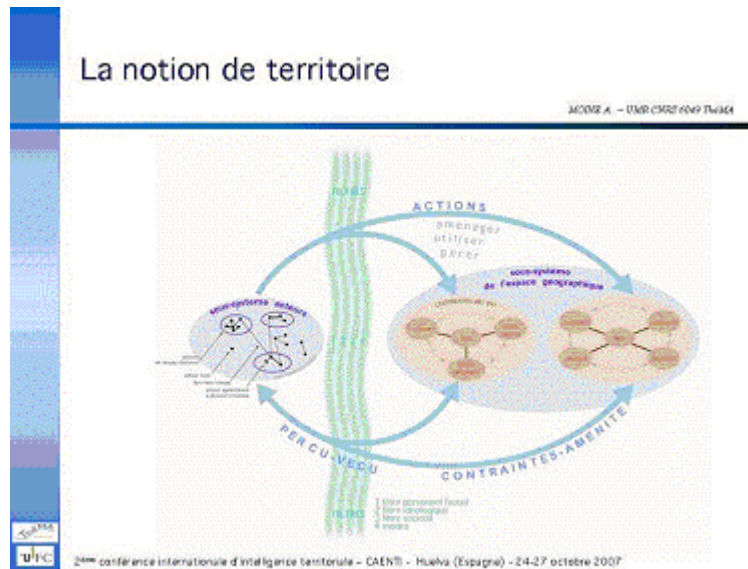
First, a territory is a system, and is indeed endowed with all the characteristics of any complex system. It is made of two twin sub-systems: on the one hand, the actors playing mutual games when using, developing or managing the second sub-system, the geographic space. The latter is made of places or objects which interact according to their location and even more so through the amenities or constraints which they provide to actors. This interaction creates the feedback loop of regional development.

Secondly, observation is the long-term monitoring of a given system, a system described by an array of indicators shared by a community. This underlines the extent to which observation tools are at the heart of systems where actors are in conflict, at the heart of a given territory, at the heart of governance indeed. But this also highlights the issue of indicators which use various and multiple data to describe the consequences of the use, of the development and of the management of a geographic space by human beings.

Finally, governance relies on the complex relations between the actors of a territorial system with a view to guaranteeing its permanence through contradictory relations which ultimately require a consensus within “*a continuous process of cooperation and adjustment between different and conflicting interests*” (SMOUTS 1998). Thus governance must gather all the actors within a territorial system. It may eventually be described as “*a process coordinating actors, social groups, institutions, with a view to reaching specific goals which were discussed and defined collectively within discontinued and uncertain environments*” (BAGNASCO et LE GALES 1997).

In this context, the actors on a specific territory should be given the ability to obtain reliable information thanks to observation tools and therefore to make informed decisions and support an efficient governance. As geographic space keeps changing, it is essential to create tools able to provide a constantly updated image -notwithstanding the space or time scale required- taking into account the evolutions of institutional frameworks.

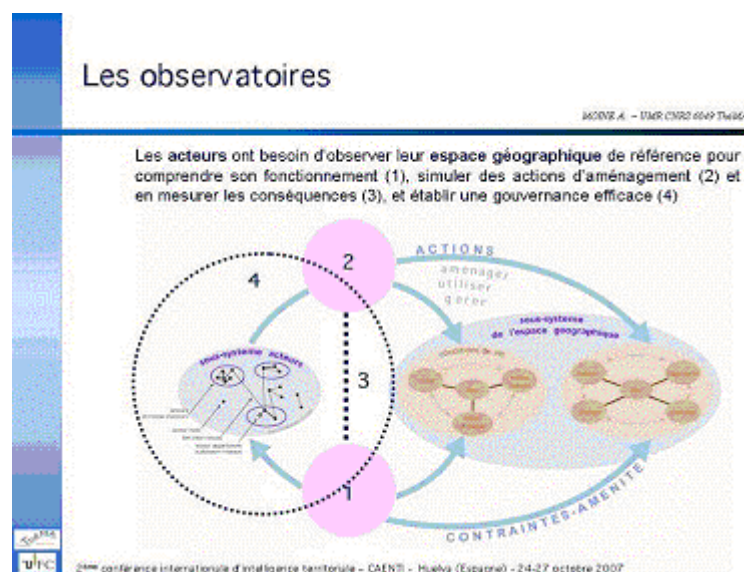
Figure 1: the notion of territory.



1.2. Observatories

Observatories are generally tools designed to satisfy specific expectations from their users. In the field of regional development and territorial intervention, they aim at sharing reliable data permitting to describe the geographic space upon which the users are to act by using, developing or managing. This highlights the issue of indicators which, thanks to multiple and various data, make it possible to assess the consequences of the utilisation, development and management of geographic space by humans. There exist different types of indicators, each with a different logic: they may describe a system's condition -a diagnosis-, the impact of development policies -an assessment-, or the likely evolutions of a system -a forecast. There are also differences related to their organisation within the observation tools: they may deal with themes -population, housing, employment etc...-, or stakes -such as precariousness for instance- which concern all of these themes. Finally, observation implies sharing information in two different ways: upwards, so as to gather more information for the observatory, and downwards so as to use it in a rational way. Local territories as we presently know them are many-sided and they federate a large number of actors in the field of development to work on a project. Governance, which may be interpreted in many different ways, helps, justifies and supports these changes.

Figure 2: Observatories



1.3. Problems hindering governance

Today we may notice that a large variety of actors have an influence on the geographic space. This is explained by the French system characterised by its multiple administrative levels which became even more complex with the devolution process and then the growing cooperation between local authorities -with the birth of the "intercommunalité", a formal network of neighbouring local councils-, and also with the evolution towards new processes involving more participation. Since many actors play a role in a single reference

space, it becomes necessary to encourage a cooperative approach. Today it has become obvious that sharing data is essential to supporting the decision-making process: the cost of gathering such data is generally high, and they often describe only one aspect of the dynamics to be studied. If we are to improve our understanding of how territories function, we cannot be satisfied with analysing only trade or industrial data but we must compare the latter with more extensive data, allowing us to take a much larger view of the different problems being studied. Yet it appears that exchanging data remains difficult from a technical standpoint, and is also quite time-consuming; people lack time and tend to forget about it, which implies the production of more superficial analyses, for which no common references have been agreed upon by the various actors in charge of regional development. As a consequence, governance may be described as insufficient since the actors' visions cannot be superimposed. Thus their interventions are scattered and often inappropriate.

1.4. The problems of economic observation

In the field of economic observation, the problems evoked above are stressed by another phenomenon: the ongoing competition between the various actors who are supporting economic promotion encourages defensive behaviours. Thus any information about the geographic space, the actors, more generally the territory is often viewed as strategic data. It seems impossible to share such data which include references to files concerning firms and their full descriptions. Such files have been painstakingly established and updated and are thus considered no less than treasures. Yet they are sometimes very disappointing, they often contain identical information, they are scattered and can by no means be exhaustive. Much time would be saved by sharing these files which are not exchanged. They rarely benefit from complementary data which could be used as the basis for reliable and shared indicators. Such a situation leads us to conclude that economic observation is weakened, often dealing only with specific aspects, specific categories of businesses, specific areas whereas nothing is done to consider a sharing of information.

2. OSER70, AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION WITH AN INTERNET-BASED EXCHANGE PROCESS

IAD-Informatique and the Théma research group were chosen by the *Agence Régionale de Développement de Franche-Comté* to design and develop an adequate technical solution allowing socio-economic observation in the local context. The tool relies on a regional data storage hub jointly used by the different actors producing or using information. A dedicated Web interface (OSER70) enables them to upload and download the hub's data and to consult the indicators produced by statistical processing. Various representations of these indicators are available -charts, territory profiles, maps, figures. This new tool's goals may be described as follows:

- sharing existing resources
- developing socio-economic information, in terms of quality as well as quantity, through a multiplication of information sources -general and specialized
- capitalise socio-economic information by making it available to a larger range of actors

- encourage the birth of regional “territorial intelligence” network

Thus the original idea consists in offering a tool able to record data -figures, documents, maps-, to make them available to all the users, to update them, to compare and sort them and to accomplish the necessary calculations so as to build strategic indicators related to a territory. A territory profile may therefore be constantly updated with the help of information pertaining to various themes -population, housing, businesses, employment, household resources...

Indeed, this decision to set up an observatory should eventually encourage a change in local governance as it enables the different actors to gain better knowledge of the geographic space that they use together, that they control and manage. But governance will not appear only because the observatory is functioning; governance must be considered a specific goal when designing the tool. We finally noted three steps which encourage the partners’ involvement in the observatory’s creation. Even before the tool is being set up, this involvement fosters relations which appear to be necessary when establishing better governance:

- helping privileged partners to identify and exchange whatever data they use
- explaining the procedures which guarantee the quality and safety of data
- implementing and clarifying statistical secret

When such support measures -also known as project support- are taken, it appears clearly that data are very simply at the heart of the various actors’ concerns. Even though they generally disregarded them, they approach data differently. Indeed they are information to be shared. When suspicions concerning their use, their safety during transfer processes and the issue of statistical secret are alleviated, actors are noticeably more willing to consider setting up an observatory, which implies sharing their data. If no such measures are taken, they procrastinate and will not readily acknowledge the potential advantages of the upcoming tool. The method appears as a catalyst for attention. It also encourages relations between actors through the different questions which they have to answer, compelling them to identify existing or potential partners and to assess their unsatisfied needs as far as data and indicators are concerned.

2.1. Collaborative work as a goal

Setting up such an observatory requires a detailed knowledge of the needs of the various actors likely to feed and/or use it. They belong to some twenty different bodies -state and local administrations, development agencies, Chambers of Commerce, trade-union representative bodies etc. It is therefore vital to gather information about the way they work, which area they cover or manage, what prerogatives they have: such knowledge is essential to establish a very accurate definition of the future users’ needs and also to offer them a customised solution.

With this goal in mind, we led a qualitative survey -based on interviews- in order to achieve a detailed understanding of the various actors’ roles and skills and to identify as accurately as possible which data are routinely used by these actors and also how they

manage and exploit them. This enabled us to define their specific needs in terms of information -data, indicators etc...

We were aware of the very large scope of the issues to be discussed during a two-hour interview -sometimes even shorter- and we prepared interview guidelines which were sent to all stakeholders before meeting them. Some actors accepted the rules and took time to look into the document, but many of them had their first look at it during the meeting, which indeed made it a little more difficult for us to collect information.

2.2.1. Aspects of methodology

We not only discussed with the technicians who produce or handle data on a daily basis, but we thought it was also essential to talk with decision-makers within the various organisations studied. They are indeed the ones who make strategic decisions. They should take a global view, thinking beyond the vertical approach generally observed among junior employees who do not necessarily have the opportunity to take a distance and size up the real scope of their organisation's global intervention. But beyond this consideration, we truly believe that setting up an observation network should necessarily imply that as many of its users as possible are familiar with its concepts, methods and techniques. Another necessary precondition is to help people become aware of the consequences that creating an observatory will have in terms of internal organisation as well as local governance. We actually needed to explain and illustrate what an observatory looks like so that the necessary changes could occur and the adequate decisions could be made by authorities.

This led to organise specific meetings, with two successive stages designed to avoid consuming too much of the managers' or department heads' time. The first stage -about thirty minutes- was essentially intended for the authorities. It was closer to a discussion than an interview -in fact a semi-guided interview- and aimed at improving our knowledge of the partner through a thorough description of the organisation.

In a second stage of the meeting -which lasted from thirty minutes to two hours, depending on the organisation-, we essentially discussed with the technical staff and this allowed us to build up a clear view of the various professional approaches -based on their skills- and eventually discuss indicators.

Information collected in the process was organised on a heuristic map which had been pre-designed on the basis of the questions listed in the interview guide. It is a chart representing connections between the various issues dealt with together, a mission and a person directly involved in it, a topic and an outside organisation playing a role in the intervention, an issue and the data or indicators related to it, some data and the people producing or using them, an indicator and the data used to build it etc...

2.1.2. A better knowledge of the partners

We established a descriptive file for each organisation we met. Our goal is to achieve a better knowledge of the organisations and their missions. It provides some clear indications on their internal structure, partnerships, field of intervention, interests and expectations as far as the socio-economic observatory project is concerned.

The information originally collected thanks to the answers brought to our questions may be completed by the organisation after the interview.

Understanding internal governance so as to find the right links with the observatory

Understanding the internal governance pattern which defines how partners get involved in the OSER70 network is absolutely essential.

The people we met represent their department or organisation. In all cases, we need to retrace the decision making process and identify whatever authority each of them may ultimately be submitted to.

More specifically, we try to collect information enabling us to identify -within the organisation- the resource staff likely to be involved in the observatory project, for instance thanks to a decisional or functional org-chart:

- Who decides to get involved -or not- in a project? What about the decision-making process?
- How are the various organisational levels related within the organisation?
- Which services or departments are interested in the project?
- Which services or departments are interested in new data and new indicators?

Assessing the technical capability concerning data management

As far as data are concerned, we question partners about how their internal organisation provides for the management and functioning of available data collections. We focus on the means invested in this field and type of activity: is there a department or a specialised staff member in charge of managing data, is there a formalised process of data management throughout the organisation, are there adequate tools -including interoperability capability- giving access to data throughout the organisation, allowing data exchanges between departments within the organisation and also with partners, customers or suppliers -etc...- thanks to simplified transfer protocols.

We also take an interest in how information -endogenous and exogenous- is structured, particularly through rules applying to whatever data are available and possibly transferred and/or compatible with the customers', partners' or suppliers' own data.

Assessing how successful actions are through partnerships

An observatory becomes useful and economically justified only if it generates enough traffic -the number of connections to its site- or if it adds enough value as far as knowledge is concerned -adequate technical capabilities and high quality information. A data bank is expected to reduce the number of data requests by giving free access to information according to the policy applicable to data and to the persons identified among the partners. Moreover, information will be useful and provide added value only if potential users know it exists. The observatory must therefore become a visible and readable information provider.

We may also notice that, as an observatory is developing, it should by no means overlook the many relations existing between the organisations involved. Through formal partnership agreements, or sometimes much more informally, many organisations build and develop relations with other organisations, or departments within the latter, which underline the many interests they have in common.

During interviews, we determine the extent of the local network as illustrated by the many existing collaborations. We try to define as precisely as possible the status and purpose of these relations and also how they could potentially be influenced by the observatory currently being developed.

Collecting needs and expectations

Interviews are naturally part of the project support process. The managers of the organisations we interviewed are therefore expected to assess the observatory project. At this stage, many new questions are raised:

- Can/should the project entail progress in terms of internal organisation, administration, management and the use of data?
- What complementary knowledge might be produced by the observatory project, regarding analysis, synthesis, forecasts, consulting and mutual work?
- What types of cooperation are likely to be strengthened by the project, in the fields of production, consulting and also mutual work?
- Can the observatory contribute to strengthening creation -thanks to the use of new methods and techniques-, to developing communication -publicising through the whole network an actor's abilities and the results it achieved- and training -by spreading good practices?
- Can the development of OSER 70 become an opportunity to launch new projects?
- Does the manager consider the possibility of internal evolutions to adapt to the new tool, at the organisational and/or functional levels?

We intend to enable the people we meet to voice their expectations with regards to a rational use of this information pool made of data and mutually available documents.

2.1.3. Analysing the relation between the actors and the territory where they play a role

During this second stage of the interview, a very specific and technical one, our first goal is to obtain an accurate view of the geographic field of intervention of the concerned organisation -in other words the exact area within a territory where the organisation interferes directly- by listing the existing projects, the divisions in different sectors with different types of intervention, the divisions of the territory used as a temporary reference - for the specific needs of a survey for instance- or again by observing the various collaborations.

We also want to understand the organisation's position within a larger geographic space, since the former may be indirectly concerned with peripheral or remote territories, or possibly with temporarily defined territories.

Then we question the interviewees about their own approach of their territory and the bases of this perception. At this point, they are implicitly invited to go beyond administrative considerations linked to their belonging to a specific structure. This is a means to discover the fields and themes which really interest and concern all the actors involved. If need be, it may result in the supply of a wider range of indicators designed to support the actors' analyses.

2.1.4. Collecting information on the use of data

We wished to complete the listing started by the architects of the observatory and create links between the fields of competence observed, the matching phenomena and the data which were produced, processed and used. Such identification of data and indicators requires a preliminary definition of a metadata system -definition, unit, source, format, frequency, geographic scope, specific local geographic scope, etc...- built in the data model of the "*Système de gestion de base de données*", or "SGBD" -Databank management system.

We choose to highlight three categories of indicators which are now routinely observed in assessment methods:

- Context indicators offer an appraisal of the basic situation of a phenomenon and allow one to describe the global evolution of a territory, an industry or a company within an observation period. They are mostly classified in themes: demography, income, equipments, infrastructures, employment, training etc...
- Achievement indicators deal with the actors' activity within a territory. They are expressed in physical or monetary units -number of events organised, number of companies benefiting from financial support, commercial square metres built, etc...
- Result indicators report the direct and immediate effect produced by the different actors' usual interventions. They provide information about the evolution of the behaviour, abilities or performance of the direct beneficiaries. Such indicators may give physical data- available infrastructures, migratory balance, number of jobs created, etc...- or financial data -influence of the private sector's investment, turnover growth, a decrease in transportation costs.

2.1.5. Progress is real but still insufficient

Through this survey, we aimed at collecting essential information so as to build up adequate responses to the expectations of the future users of the system, thanks to a detailed understanding of each of the actors involved -human resources, specific knowledge in a field, information sources, endogenous data production, experience, know-how, communication tools...- and of their needs in terms of information.

Interviews are an opportunity to underline how essential it is to promote meetings between technicians and decision-makers about issues in which their various organisations take an interest, thanks to networks which may be more or less formalised. Because they tend to remain confined to specific approaches related to their field of intervention, the actors often have a narrow-minded view of the territory's life, even if they say they would like to

have a more comprehensive knowledge of their environment. Data collection remains characterised by individualism, in a process where many institutions pursue the same goals without any mutual connection.

Data management within databanks is by no means the rule. In many instances, information is stocked in fully written documents which require very hard work to adapt them to the demands of users.

Apart from a few exceptions -to be found in the field of territorial or economic engineering-, the space and time dimension of issues is not taken into account and the divisions are merely justified by the organisation's practices. Territory is rarely considered as a whole and its perception is influenced by the hierarchic vision of the territorial system, which certainly does not encourage the ability to understand the complex issues at stake.

Yet, while these interviews enable us to have a global approach of how local actors are organised and to explain what stakes and logics are presiding the development of the observation tool, it remains very difficult to identify the tools likely to be helpful to potential users –and the short time devoted to interviews does not make thing easier.

Moreover, we may notice that the professional practices observed essentially resort to context indicators. The available data do not reflect the implementing of interventions and their achievements. For instance, no data are available about the training or support programs intended for people creating or buying a company which are offered by Chambers of Commerce and identical organisations to their members. Nor could one assess the local impact of such programs on job creation and unemployment decrease, on turnover growth or again on exports, etc... This certainly illustrates a missing link between the problems tackled and the results obtained when projects are set up. Such a remark thus reflects the lack of a culture of evaluation, the latter being too often considered as a mere sanction punishing inadequate implementing of the organisation's skills instead of being used as a tool to bring about progress.

Therefore it seems necessary to meet the actors -in fact the stakeholders of OSER 70- again and to follow the initial methodology all the way through. Indeed the latter aimed at approaching the issue of data and indicators as a means to create links between the problems and causes met in the actors' geographic field of intervention and in their own fields of competence –and not as a mere listing.

Nevertheless, several hundreds of data were chosen and added to the tool; we used the data provided by the partners. The former were characterized -definition of metadata- and standardised –by turning text data into digitalised geographically referenced data. What mattered was not so much the relevance of such or such data but the pedagogic approach to the process, in other words showing why and how to deal with information so as to create added value. This is illustrated by the data path example -see figure 4.

Our approach has certainly been too candid or too optimistic as to how much added value such a project could bring in terms of internal organisation or the production of new knowledge. At this stage of the process, there is no denying that actors are essentially interested in understanding the ongoing change. They can hardly envision the future which

remains unclear even though changes are looming in the short term -less than six months- and find it difficult to assert their view of the project as actors or organisations. Only after the interviews and a formal meeting of the partners which gives the opportunity to display the tool's abilities do many of them become aware of the irreversibility and effectiveness of the process. At this point, they acknowledge that inducting the new tool in their practices is essential and should take place very soon. This proves how useful it was to encourage the actors to structure their data and consider setting up relevant indicators about specific issues such as analysing precariousness. As a result, groups of technicians started meeting and other groups met to discuss specific themes. But this became possible because interviews were used to alleviate concerns -see 2.2- and build up trust, a precondition to the observatory's growth.

Moreover, the formal and informal networks which may be observed in each organisation and around each key staff within them should be used to root the basic principles of territorial intelligence and observation in the economic context.

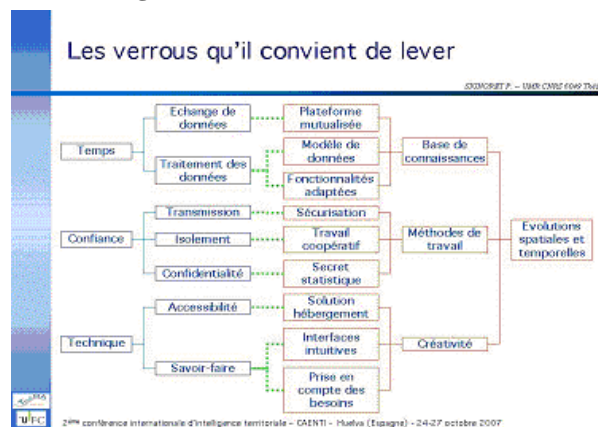
2.2. Concerns to be alleviated so that data will be at the heart of project support

Creating an observatory necessarily stirs up entrenched prejudice as to the changes generated by any innovation in the organisation and management of information and more generally the evolution of professional practices. The new territorial intelligence tools are often considered as excessively and unnecessarily complex and are also deemed to be time-consuming -it takes time to understand how it works, to feed the tool and use all its functionalities.

People tend to be afraid of such new technologies because they think they demand expert computer skills or important technical means to get connected to the system.

Potential users are even more wary of such tools because they tend to have insufficient knowledge of the actors in the territory and of the practices of some organisations whose structure and methods are quite unknown. Some also worry about how available information will be used. The data providers wonder whether data interpretation will be correct, particularly specialised data: they believe that nobody -but themselves- can really use such data.

Figure 3: concerns to be alleviated.

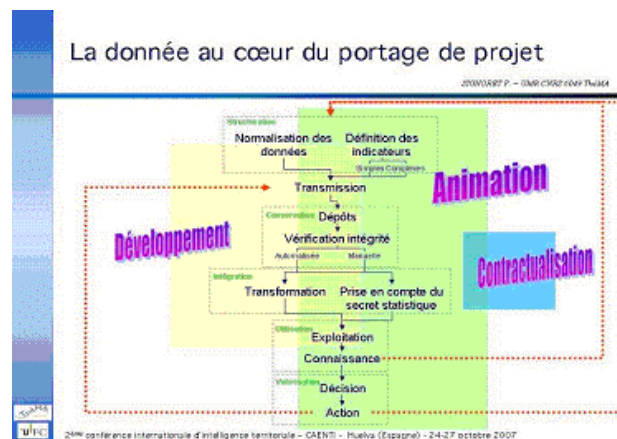


If a large number of actors are to be involved so as to build up a large community of knowledge federated by the observatory, the project proponents have to be fully aware of these concerns. They should also muster whatever energy and methods may be necessary to turn these obstacles into operational objectives likely to encourage the largest possible use of the tool:

- Decision-makers must take into account the means already committed outside any formal structure -routine practices relying on several people without any coordination- and potential productivity gains.
- An intuitive interface based on the common characteristics of Internet browsers – tabs, scroll menus etc...- must constantly provide help or extra information allowing the users to understand how to use any given functionality, where the data come from, how they were generated etc...
- Standardised data to be shared, easily exploited thanks to fast and efficient functionalities, become a real asset to strengthen the knowledge basis of the actors in the territory. They have access to information –data, documents, maps- previously available to a very limited number of people.
- Data transfer and storage have to be perfectly safe.

The observatory gathers partners coming from various backgrounds -different jobs, fields of action and approaches- who have the ability to promote and share their knowledge and experience. In such conditions it offers them the possibility to experiment cooperative work through a technical solution -software- available on the Internet. Thus the software’s development must necessarily be backed by excellent tutoring with a strong pedagogic content. If indeed the partners’ commitment to the new system is essential to justify the observatory’s creation, data remain at the heart of this system and they are naturally the major concern.

Figure 4: data is at the heart of project support.



2.3. Trust needs to grow: statistical secret

Observing the territory requires the use of data assembled and made available synthetically –charts, maps or statistical indicators. The local dynamics which are studied are observed

according to different scales. In order to allow the specific study of any type of space, it seems necessary to offer very specific data –at the lowest possible level, generally the town. But at this level, data providers usually oppose the use of data, in the name of statistical secret, professional secret and respect for individual freedom -CNIS 2002. The OSER70 databank management system takes this demand into account by offering two way of dealing with geographically referenced data:

1. A simple control: the provider determines a threshold –minimum number of items- under which the data cannot be seen. If the condition is respected, the data becomes available. Otherwise it remains hidden -replaced by SS.
2. A control based on another piece of data: this means carrying out a simple control of a piece of data -A- by defining a minimum number of items below which another piece of data -B-, cannot be obtained in the context of a specific analysis –of an area or a theme. For instance, the “turnover” data is barred by statistical secret if less than five companies are concerned. It will not be available.

The method to deal with statistical secret is provided and checked by the supplier: the observatory’s manager then inducts the data into the databank management system -*SGBD*. An algorithm written as an SQL -Structured query language- request is used to implement statistical secret. Then the *SGBD* produces a “view”, in other words an intermediate chart for each level of analysis, taking into account the constraints of secret. The “views” -rather than rough data- are then used to build up the illustrations -tables, maps, charts- available to the observatory’s users.

Beyond the technical solution, what matters is to show that technology is perfectly under control and that it takes into account the potential risks for the providers. This type of technical solution built in the organisational pattern of data handling, from the administration through to the *SGBD* and then to the web interface, is thus explained during the observatory’s slow development process. Such an advanced solution encourages a high degree of trust which is vital if partners are to adopt, use and feed the new tool.

CONCLUSION

When setting up observation tools, it appears clearly that one should essentially pay attention to future users. Because they involve the sharing of data, observatories require prior identification of every actor’s practices in order to highlight the added value brought by the new tools, but also to alleviate the future users’ concerns as to how data will be used.

If observation tools play a role in the improvement of local governance, the different actors involved first need to discover an operational solution before accepting to share data. Hence the necessity of an adequate pedagogy about the new tools, including meetings with the partners aimed at listing their expectations, explaining how their data will be inducted and shared by other users.

Governance relies first and foremost on mutual trust, which cannot be built without prior discussion and a mutual awareness of needs and practices. Such steps are necessary to make sure the observation tool will be adopted and used in the future.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BAGNASCO A. et LE GALES P. (1997) Les villes européennes comme société et comme acteur, in *Villes en Europe*, Ed. La Découverte, pp. 38.

CNIS (CONSEIL NATIONAL DE L'INFORMATION STATISTIQUE). DIVISION ENVIRONNEMENT JURIDIQUE DE LA STATISTIQUE, RENARD Y., DEPOUTOT R., LANG G., 2002: Le secret statistique concernant les entreprises: situation 2000 et perspectives d'évolution [en ligne], Paris: Conseil National de l'information statistique.

[ref du 21/02/2007]. Disponible sur Internet:

<<http://www.cnis.fr/doc/Stockage%20Rapports/rapport%2071.pdf>>

MOINE A. (2006) Le territoire comme un système complexe: un concept opératoire pour l'aménagement et la géographie. In: *L'Espace Géographique*, n° 2, p. 115-232.

MOINE A. (2007) Le territoire: comment observer un système complexe. Paris: L'Harmattan, Coll. Itinéraires Géographiques, 196 p.

MOINE A., SEDE-MARCEAU M.H. (de), THIAM S., MARCEAU P. (2006) La problématique de l'observation territoriale: contexte, stratégies et enjeux. In: NICULESCU SIMONA I. (ed.). *Observation et analyse des territoires ruraux en Europe*. Actes du Colloque international, Roumanie, Editions SEDCOM LIBRIS, p. 43-71.

ORMAUX S., SIGNORET P. (2006) Les schémas de cohérence, laboratoires d'intelligence territoriale. In: *Développement local, compétitivité et attractivité des territoires*. XIIème Colloque du GRERBAM, Sfax (Tunisie), 4-6 Septembre 2006, 8 p.

SEDE-MARCEAU M.H. (de), MOINE A. (2001) Systémique et bases de données territoriales: des concepts et des outils pour une gestion raisonnée des territoires [en ligne]. In: *SIG et développement du territoire*. *Revue Internationale de Géomatique*, vol. 11, n° 3-4, Éditions Hermès, p. 333-358.

SIGNORET P. (2003) Projet de développement, projet de territoire et démarche participative. In: *Actes des Sixièmes Rencontres de Théo Quant*, février 2003.

SMOUTS M.C. (1998) Du bon usage de la gouvernance en relations internationales, in *La gouvernance*, in *Revue internationale des sciences sociales*, n° 155, pp. 88.