ANAIS DEGACHE

The Europeanisation of scientific research and the transformation of collaborations in sustainability science

The LIFE PASTORALP case-study

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Introduction

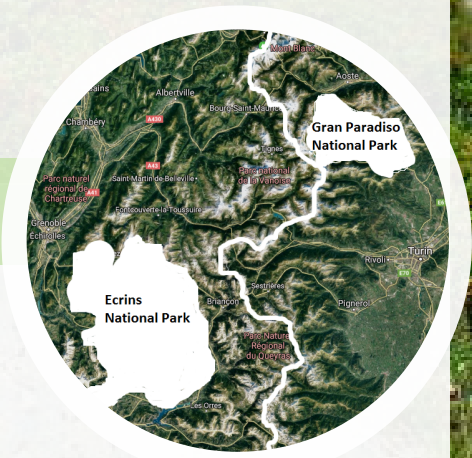
This document summarizes a qualitative sociological study carried out between February and July 2019.
The internship is part of the project LIFE PASTORALP (10/2017 - 03/2022), for a budget of about 2 million euros. PASTORALP aims to develop climate change adaptation strategies for alpine pastures, reduce the vulnerability of agro-pastoral systems and increase their resilience in two national parks.
This study aims to situate the transformations of inter- and transdisciplinary collaborations in their transition towards a European framework.

The partners are:
- the University of Florence (UNIFI): pilot of the project
- the Gran Paradiso National Park (PNGP), Italy
- the Ecrins National Park (PNE), France
- The Regional Agricultural Institute of Valle d'Aosta (IAR), Italy
- the environmental agency of Valle d'Aosta (ARPA Valle d'Aosta), Italy
- the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), France
- the National Institute for Research in Science and Technology for the Environment and Agriculture (IRSTEA) of Grenoble, France
- the National Institute for Agronomic Research (INRA), including a team in Avignon and a team in Clermont-Ferrand, France

A rise in European collaborations

PASTORALP is a "demonstrative" LIFE (Financial Instrument for the Environment) project: it experiments with various actions and adaptation methods that are, as of yet, unused in the geographical, ecological and socio-economic context of the two Parks. LIFE projects are specifically set in the environmental and climate spheres and aim at being replicated in other territories.
LIFE projects may include research activities. This project-based research is part of sustainability science, a research area that aims at building a scientific framework for more sustainable policies.

At the European level, this type of mission-based research is increasingly common and valued. Collaborations are considered essential for understanding complex phenomena such as climate change, whether interdisciplinary (between scientific disciplines) or transdisciplinary (between academic and non-academic partners).
A "European Research Area" is being created around these collaborations PASTORALP is a case study to understand the transformations of collaborations when they enter a European framework.



Method

This study is based on:
- the analysis of the primary resources from the European Commission (reports, regulations, directives, strategies) and of the project (internal reports, minutes of meetings, contracts, presentations, meeting notes, emails, interviews conducted before).
- Sixteen semi-structured interviews, in French and Italian, from March to April 2019, with the project partners.
- on three observations: two participatory workshops, the first in Gap (FR) on February 6, 2019 and the second in Ivrea (IT) on February 20, 2019, as well as a meeting of the territorial committee of PASTORALP on March 19, 2019 at l'Argentière (FR).

More heterogeneous and extended collaborations

To understand the transformation of collaborations, it is necessary to analyse them chronologically. Three collaborative subnetworks have entered the project, in successive stages: a first network resulting from a previous project (BELMONT PANACEA), a second network resulting from French-Italian transalpine collaborations and a final network around the Ecrins National Park and Alpages Sentinelles.

By integrating these sub-networks into the larger PASTORALP network, the collaborations **spread geographically**: the partners are disseminated over a large area, from Clermont-Ferrand to Florence and also **increased in number**s. This in turn heightened the **heterogeneity** of the collaborative framework: s, the objects of study the motivations to collaborate and the representations of the content of each project differ between the subnetworks. Each subnetwork is characterized by a collaborative past and great trust between its members.

On the other hand, new collaborations are forming, especially **administrative ones**: with the Europeanisation of research, the time allocated to the administrative dimension of the projects has strongly increased. These new collaborations are characterized by a centralization around the pilot of the project.

Collaborations therefore are becoming more **formal** and structured.

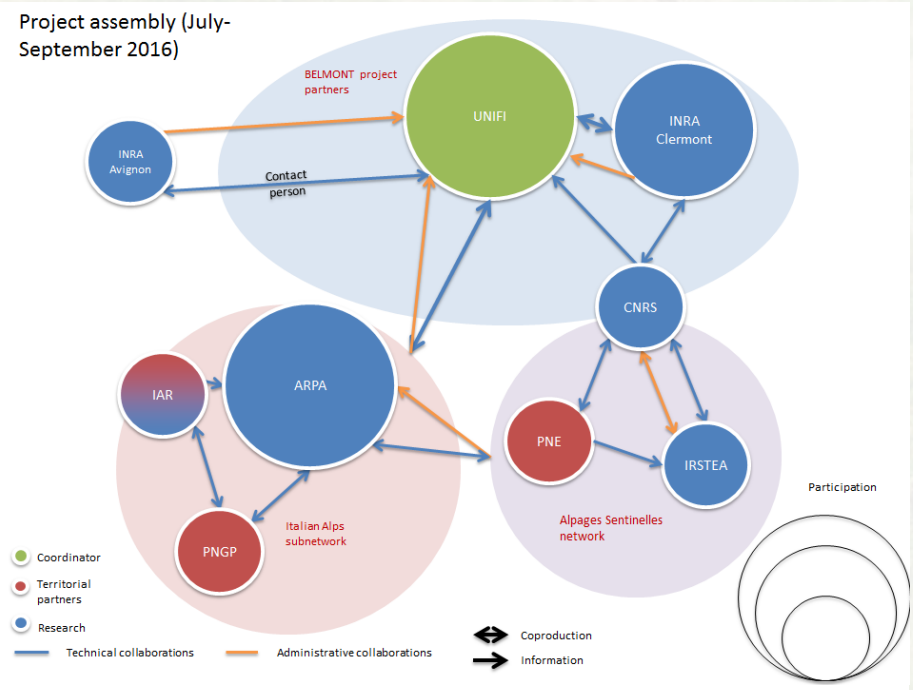
	BELMONT project (UNIFI, INRA + CNRS)	ARPA/PNGP/IAR/PNE	PNE/IRSTEA/CNRS
Motivations	Continue their work to model the impacts of climate change on alpine pastures	Continue work already initiated and build a territory project with farmers and shepherds	Continue reflections already carried out within the framework of Alpages Sentinelles

Table 1. Heterogeneous motivations to be part of the project for each subnetwork.

Different collaborative phases

Administrative, scientific and technical collaborations do not unfold in the same way and to the same degree throughout the different stages of the project. Four collaborative phases can be highlighted within the project:

- the first phase is the setting up of the project and runs from July to September 2016. Some partners act as a link between the partners of the first network with the two others, largely for questions of language and collaborative past. This is the case, for example, of ARPA.
- the second phase, between acceptance and the launch of the project, is mainly characterized by administrative and financial collaborations.

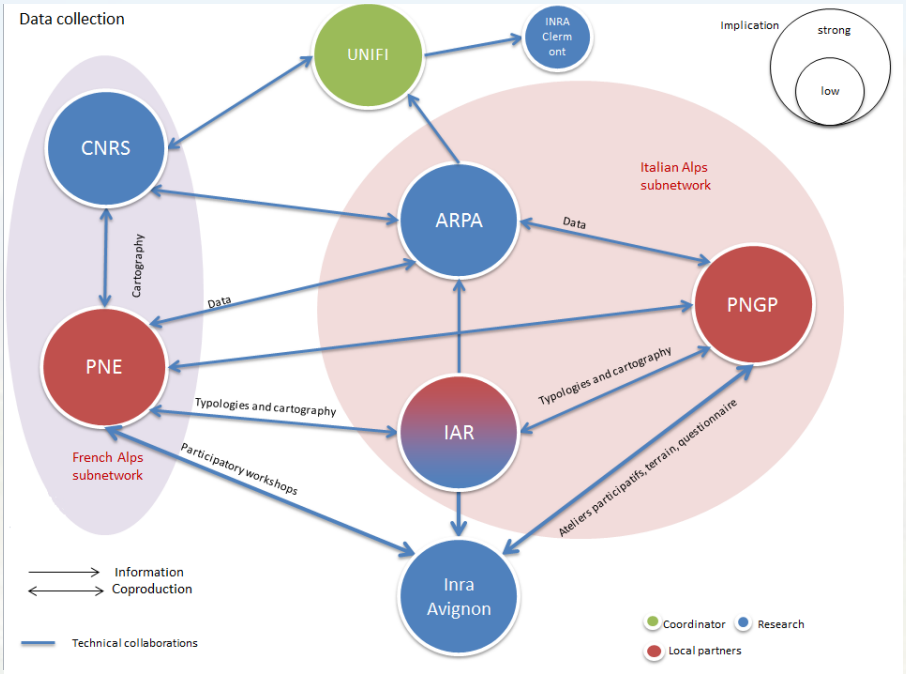


Outline 1. Collaborations during the project assembly phase

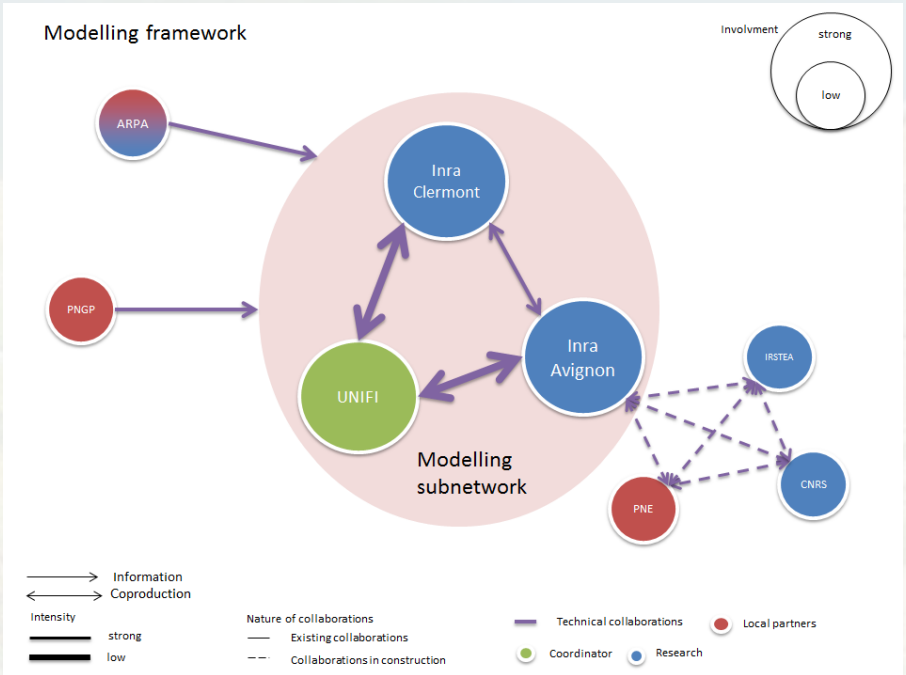
It is at this point that the administrative collaborations are put in place and will last until the completion of the project. The administrative collaborations are characterized in particular by the presence of the European Commission. The third and fourth collaborative phases take place at almost the same time during the project.

- The third collaborative phase is data collection. Territorial actors are central. New collaborations are forming: for example IAR and PNE. The network is extended in terms of the number of partners involved. The collaborations are **intense** with the usual partners.
- The last collaborative phase is dependent on the third: it's the modelling phase of climatic impacts on mountain pastures. The collaborations here are characterized by intense collaborations between the partners of the first network, resulting from the previous project. New and deeper collaborations could be created in the future (notably INRA / IRSTEA / CNRS / PNE).

Out of lack of time, I have dealt here only with scientific and technical collaborations, but I could have also dealt with organizational and communication collaborations, which are different.



Outline 2. Collaborations during the data collection phase.



Outline 3. Collaborations during the modelling phase.

Pre-existing collaborations that reinforce each other

Where collaborations derive from pre-existing ones, they tend to become stronger as part of the project. Collaborations are woven between partners who already trusted each other. When there is collaboration, this is possible thanks to characteristics that bring together the partners: same mother tongue, same object of study, same place in the project, same territory, etc.

On the other hand, new collaborations can emerge only if favorable conditions exist and allow each party to collaborate: for example, to share the same language, the same object of studies, the same territory. The personalities are in this case decisive.

The **pace** of the project (in the reports to make, the choices to make ...) push the actors to choose the path of least resistance, which often implies going to partners with pre-existing links and working relations. Other factors may also explain this phenomenon.

What are the transformational factors?

The transition to a European framework entails several transformative factors: institutional, structural and cultural, personal or geographical.
The transformations are due to the evolving institutional framework. LIFE projects are action- not research-oriented. However, the research, which is not linear, must adapt to meet the specific needs of LIFE, whether in terms of budget or division of work into actions. The need for transparency in terms of finances and time spent on the project by the actors also lead to very detailed projects. The consequence is a reinforced **formalism** in the global share of working time (time sheets, monthly written reports ...) and therefore the increase of administrative collaborations.
The transformations are due **to the structural framework of the project research**. It entails a need for financing: the economic factor is therefore decisive in the motivation to integrate a project and to collaborate with new partners. The global network thus becomes very heterogeneous and the subnetworks that make it up are on the contrary small and homogeneous. It's about going to the simplest, given the limited time and resources.
Transformations are also due to **language, geography and personalities**. Language is a strong link: when bilingual persons less difficulty navigating between different networks whose main language is French or Italian. English is the lingua franca without being able to do this role of binder, especially since it slows down the work, since it is not the mother tongue of most involved in the project. On the other hand, the geographical distance also transforms the collaborations: they are disseminated over a large territory, which is problematic to be seen often at a lower cost. Despite the resort to digital means of communication, collaborations are more effective when people can meet physically. Finally, it is also the trust and personalities of the partners that transform the collaborations: they become more formal on the one hand, but they reinforce themselves thanks to the trust on the other hand.

Conclusion

This work shows the effects of the Europeanization of research on collaborations, which extend geographically and include new actors who did not know each other before. It reports on factors that may or may not lead to collaborations in this type of project. In the context of sustainability sciences, interdisciplinary or interdisciplinary research has become a central element: it allows a co-production of knowledge oriented towards implementation actions, with the aim of responding to the challenges related to global changes. Investigating inter- and transdisciplinary collaborations helps to understand them better and ultimately improve knowledge about this co-production.

For further information

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