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**Report on evaluation of the Quality Letter  
UFC team conclusions**

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## Summary

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## ***1 – INTRODUCTION***

During the CAENTI latest international conference in October 2007 in Huelva (Spain), the WP5 state of the thinking was presented under the form of a suggestion of “Quality Letter of Research-Action”. This document, drafted by Blanca Miedes Ugarte, Dolores Redondo Toronjo and Laurent Amiotte-Suchet, on the basis of the works and meetings led by the WP5 members in 2006 and 2007, had the form of a guide that aimed at listing all the dimensions able to favour an enduring collaborative participation between academic researchers and ground actors in the setting up, implementation and management of a research-action project.

In 2006, a series of interviews was made with projects owners of the Université de Franche-Comté. On the basis of these interviews, “projects cards” were drafted and appended in the Deliverable 2006. These documents presented projects that pretended to articulate research and actions and thus described the conditions in which “participation” was contemplated and made by the partners. Quickly it appeared that, after these interviews, that there was a notable difference of approach between the projects owners, according to the status of the main project owner(s) and according to the main aimed objective(s) (knowledge/action). Thus, we go from academic projects that mainly have research objectives and trying, to reach their objectives, to guarantee the participation of actors and stake-holders susceptible to give them access to the searched information (authorization necessary to access archives or confidential data for example), to projects of social action that felt the need to solicit researchers’ skill, at a certain moment of their development, so as to help them better know, better understand and better adapt to the multi-dimensional complexity of human situations they face. The “Districts atlas” project and the “Réseau Cocagne” project are thus two examples that particularly oppose in their step. The “Districts Atlas” project is a study made by academics (geographers) at the request of political stake-holders. It is the occasion for the academics to fund deep ground research activities and thus to get wider knowledge on the urban grounds. Consequently, the project ends with the delivery of a research report without the academics feel concerned by the intentions and political objectives linked to the use of such a tool. On the other hand, the “Réseau Cocagne” project is the work of ground actors that want to implement an experiment susceptible to favour the care and then reintegration of precarious and marginalized people in the society. Because of the firm success and of the need to control the itinerary of people who benefit from the network support on the short or on the long term that this projects owners wanted to implement a closer collaboration with the academic environments so as to be able to take advantage of the methods and tools tested to analysis itineraries of people who benefit at a given moment of their life of the network support.

All the other projects described in the Deliverable 2006 are between these two boundaries, between knowledge objective and action objectives. We should take into account the fact research-action is rarely a specific activity mode and more usually refers to an intellectual and commitment project that aims at the same time at improving the action by academics’ participation and at improving action by academics’ participation to social action projects.

The WP5 members inscribed their definition of research-action in the seeking for this double necessity. Very quickly, it appeared that this difficult conciliation between research and action required a genuine and enduring participation of researchers and actors to implement and manage projects. Although, including if this notion of “participation” seems obvious, it is not always so genuine that the projects owners think.

If it is relatively easy to claim implementing all the elements necessary to favour participation of every one to the drafting and execution of a project, a priority objective (research/action) often (or even permanently) strongly impresses the project and harms the genuine and enduring participation of all the participants (researchers/actors). The thinking led by the WP5 members temporarily reached to the drafting of a Quality letter which objective is to identify the conditions, at least favourable, to execute an enduring collaboration between researchers-academics and ground actors within the framework of research-action projects.

### ***1.1. Methodology***

This document, « European quality letter of research favouring territorial governance of sustainable development », identifies four principles (and for each of them several means) susceptible to favour an enduring collaborative participation:

- \* Principle 1: Mobilization of the territorial actors and resources
  - Investigation of the target territory’s actors and resources
  - Organization of actors/researchers partnerships
- \* Principle 2: Mutualisation of the whole competences and knowledge
  - Multidimensionality of the action-research
  - Co-learning
- \* Principle 3: Responsibility of participants and involved institutions
  - Organization of a collaborative management of the project
  - Deontology and autonomy of participants
- \* Principle 4: Common property of the results of the Action-Research
  - Regular evaluation of the impact on the territory
  - Durability of the implemented actions

By relying on the interviews made with the projects owners and on the informal interviews made with some of them during the CAENTI annual conferences, we will study again and comment each of these four principles so as to see on the one hand insofar they are implemented in some projects and on the other hand which kind of difficulties seems to emerge from these different principles. All these projects that were presented in a detailed card in the Deliverable 2006 will not be taken into account as several among them do not correspond, as regards their objective, to the definition of research-action within the CAENTI network. The projects taken into account within the framework of this document are the following ones:

- **The « SPODJ Project »:** « *Sport in Jura Département* » (it ended in 2004) led to the implementation of a data basis that is accessible on Internet. It allows the acquisition and exploitation in real time of all the data that are available about the sporting fact in the department of Jura.

- **The « ADAPEI project »:** « *Association of parents and friends of the mental handicapped people* (ADAPEI of Besançon) is a French national organization which works to favor the handicapped people's integration.  
(<http://www.adapeibesancon.asso.fr/>)
  
- **The « Cocagne network » project »:** « *Cocagne gardens* » were born in 1991 in Chalezeule (Doubs), and then they quickly developed in all the French territory. They are organic collective gardens that employ people who are in a very precarious situation, so as to accompany them at a moment of their life to avoid their marginalization and help them to reintegrate the society.  
(<http://www.reseaucocagne.asso.fr/>).

## **2 – CONTENTS**

### **2.1. Mobilization of the territorial actors and resources**

- 1.a Investigation of the target territory's actors and resources
- 1.b Organization of actors/researchers partnerships

This principle is particularly present in the three considered projects. Inscribed for a long time on the territory, Réseau Cocagne and ADAPEI lay on long-term partnerships with different actors that are all linked to their actions. SPODJ is a project inscribed in a shorter temporality, as it ended (on the contrary of the two other projects). It is a fundamental difference. The importance to durably mobilise the territory resources is linked to the project duration (the latter is linked to objectives). In the SPODJ project, the objective is to make a knowledge and analysis tool of a territory sport reality. At the end of the project, made in collaboration with the actors linked to the sport life (federations, clubs...), the tool is entrusted to the main organization that funded the project –the Conseil Régional- so as it exploits the tool potentialities. In this kind of configuration, the resources mobilization (all the sport actors) and the partnership organization is not indispensable at the beginning. It only becomes necessary at the end of the project, when the tool exploitation starts, that is to say when the academics leave the partnership.

The situation is different for ADAPEI and Réseau Cocagne that are organizations which existence is far anterior to the partnership they have with the University. Both wanted, within this partnership framework, to deepen their knowledge of the public towards which they actions are directed. There are already many partnerships between these organizations and other actors of territory, before their partnership with the university starts. Within this framework, it is not considered that a work to take inventory of the territory resources is necessary at the beginning of the project as, for these organizations responsables, all the partnerships considered as necessary are already implemented. The academics are experts-consultants who are not part of the whole organization actions, but bring analysis elements that are precious to improve action.

### **2.2. Mutualisation of the whole competences and knowledge**

- 2.a Multidimensionality of the action-research
- 2.b Co-learning

The three projects that are used here to evaluate the grid have in common to lay on partnerships with the same laboratory of the université de Franche-Comté – *Théoriser et Modéliser pour Aménager* (ThéMA) – that is already a multi-disciplinary structure favourable to a multi-dimensional approach of the phenomena that are linked to the territories analysis. As in the first principle, we should distinguish the SPODJ project from the other two cases. Indeed, the latter did not require a real training of the ground actors to the research steps in humanities and social sciences because the participation of these actors was not considered necessary to the project development. It is only at the end of the project (perhaps too late), when the software was finished that the ground actors' training (and consequently competence) issue was asked. The other two projects (ADAPEI and Cocagne) implied many training and work meetings, what certifies a genuine partnership between the academics and

the ground actors in the control of a good understanding of the concerned people's specificity and in the seeking of the possible solutions aiming at improving the quality of the led actions.

The first difficulty consists in the clientelism relation that can always characterise the relation the ground actors have with researchers. On the contrary, the second difficulty consists in the relation of educational domination that can always characterise the relation academics have with actors. These two "perceptions of the other one" are one of the main reasons that make the mutual training difficult. The fact researchers intervene within the framework of a partnership project that does not include all the organization objectives is also a bridle to the real mutualisation of the competences and knowledge of the ones and the others. In this kind of relation, the researcher makes a general evaluation of the organization and of its possible dysfunctions. But the concerned actors, because they are necessarily inscribed in a set of wider economical, political and institutional constraints, can quickly be tempted to question the academics' competence to judge situations of which they do not endure all the constraints.

In all cases, the ground actors' participation to the execution of surveys trying to enrich the quantitative data by qualitative and understanding approaches (where the actors' knowledge *in situ* becomes indispensable) are the best factor for the development of a genuine collaboration of actors and researchers in the projects understanding and development.

### ***2.3. Responsibility of participants and involved institutions***

3.a Organization of a collaborative management of projects

3.b Deontology and autonomy of participants

This notion of «responsabilisation» is more directly linked to the kind of implemented partnership. Within the framework of the SPODJ project, the end of the partnership between academics and actors when the tool is implemented clear the researchers of the exploitation that will be able to be done of the project results (here an analysis software). Within the framework of the ADAPEI and Cocagne projects, the CATALYSE method application implies the seeking of a more formal and enduring collaboration. Researchers and actors are more directly involved and responsabilised within the partnership framework, because they have the same deadlines and the same results objectives. Even if the researchers of the SPODJ project hope the sport actors will manage collectively organise to efficiently exploit the software that is put at their disposal (especially regarding the access to data and the exploitation that can be made of them), no partnership organization formalises the researchers' consultative role. On the contrary, the relations between academics and actors of the ADAPEI and Cocagne projects give more sense of responsibility. The concern to allow the project keeping its autonomy regarding the organization is a determining one in a project such as ADAPEI that is inscribed in a wide organization linked to the State organizations. Within the framework of this project, only some ADAPEI actors are involved in the partnership implemented with the academics. This relation, inscribed in the long term, is centred on the project team. The committed ADAPEI actors change their status within the project framework as they have a responsibility of project owner, in a relation of equity with the academics. It is possibly this dimension –existence of a formal organization of the projects owners gathering actors and researchers on same objectives- that better favours the long-term participants' responsabilisation whilst guaranteeing a kind of transparency. This dimension is less visible in the Cocagne project where the organization actors have been concerned to keep

the autonomy of each garden regarding the network guardianship and the network autonomy regarding the State organization guardianship, since the organization creation. For the actors of an organization as wide as ADAPEI, the autonomy of the project owners is determining. The formalisation of the committees in charge of defining the project orientations and to reach the determined objectives contribute to value the actors involved, and consequently to give them a sense of responsibility. The temporality proper to the SPODJ project makes this kind of organization obsolete as the researchers do not assume the responsibility of the analysis software exploitation made within the project framework.

#### ***2.4. Common property of the results of the Action-Research***

- 4.a Regular evaluation of the impact on the territory
- 4.b Durability of the implemented actions

This fourth dimension remains the most difficult to evaluate. It implies the necessary existence of an evaluation organization which is external to the projects owners' team, what does not presently exist in the three projects we took into account. Such an evaluation, to be competitive, would imply an important financing plan to allow making an autonomous expertise based on a ground survey with the concern public, in order to measure the real impact of the led actions.

### ***3 – CONCLUSION***

By questioning three projects with the analysis grid suggested by the WP5, it appeared obvious that this grid is only a tool to help implementing research-action projects. The situation diversity, the kind of implemented partnership, the collaboration starting date and the respective importance of the various organizations that fund the project make each project a particular configuration that does not allow a strict application of all the criteria suggested by the grid. According to us, the guarantee of an enduring collaborative participation to the projects success consists in the formalisation of a ground actors and researchers-academics team who will jointly be responsible for the project impact on the territory. When there is not this kind of committee, the ingredients of an enduring participation can not be perfectly reached: equity, transparency, responsabilisation, and autonomy.

## ***4 – APPENDIX: DESCRIPTION OF THE QUOTED PROJECTS***

### ***4.1. SPODJ Project***

The goal of the sporting fact laboratory “laboratoire du fait sportif” is to manage to create a data-processing data basis that would be accessible through Internet and would allow to make a diagnosis of the sporting fact in real time and according to the demand, on the basis of multiple possible entries (geographical scales, disciplines, existing infrastructures, reception possibility of the spaces, use dates and size of the equipments according to the different standards of federations, etc.). The goal of this project was to make a data basis that would be able to integrate and organize the data given by the institutions (federations, leagues, sporting clubs, etc) and the contextual data (road networks, available sporting equipments, etc). This project that was led from 2002 to 2004 implied the preparation of the actors to update the data basis and to study the sporting fact in Jura to organize the links of the data basis. Thanks to this tool, the user can presently get statistics, maps and various updated information on the sporting potential of the department. The data-processing tool was created to adapt to the demand and to allow each user choosing his scale to make diagnosis. In 2004, Théma let the sporting observatory in Jura to the actors so as it become a true “tool to help decision-making”. Nevertheless, the data basis keeps being lodged by the University. A data-processing company manages the site and guarantees its maintenance.

### ***4.2. ADAPEI Project***

The *Association of parents and friends of the mental handicapped people* (ADAPEI) is a French national organization which works to favour the handicapped people’s integration. In 1995, the ADAPEI of Besançon and the MTI@SHS collaborated on a first diagnostic about the people insertion in an open environment. The analyse will underline the need of a better coordination on the long term of the offered services to the persons who are jointly confronted to social acceptance, access to employment and to professional trainings problems. The teams work will focus on the itineraries to coordinate the services and to avoid the interlocutors’ multiplication for people who face several kinds of difficulties. The objective was to define a single referent to have more coherence by managing the resource-people the person is supposed to meet and not the person herself. Putting online tools that guarantee a better

coordination of the services to allow a single referent managing the whole of difficulties of a handicapped person constituted a fundamental dimension of this research-action (work in network in logic of search of efficiency of the allocations that are given to recipients).

### ***4.3. Cocagne network Project***

The « Cocagne gardens » were born in 1991 in Chalezeule (Doubs), and then they quickly developed in all the French territory. They are organic collective gardens that employ people who are in a very precarious situation so as to accompany them at a moment of their life to avoid their marginalization and help them to reintegrate in the society. The social dimension is in the centre of the gardens philosophy, but they are partly funded by a users' network (the so-called “consomm'acteurs”) that eat the cultivated vegetables (weekly baskets). The “organic vegetables” dimension also gives to the “Cocagne gardens” a global conception of the sustainable development, that is at the same time social, economic and ecologic, especially by allowing to underprivileged adults finding an employment in the organic agriculture field and involving in a collective firm where the proximity social links are valorised, so as to build a personal and professional project. The network Cocagne which was created in Franche-Comté spread in all the French territory and then in Europe. There are presently 75 gardens. The gardens responsables contacted the MTI@SHS, which whom a partnership had been initiated in the Mosaïque framework, concerning evaluation. The classic evaluations only asked each garden to present a balance sheet in terms of effective reinsertions each year. But these declarations lacked of relevance to take into account individual situations. The partnership that was implemented with the MTI@SHS allowed developing an evaluation system that at the same time was applicable to each of the 75 gardens and able to allow the fusion of these data in a global evaluation of the network on the long term.