

Stakeholder analysis for France

Over the period from 2007 to 2013, 44 French institutions have participated in 28 Alpine Space (hereafter AS) projects from the thematic fields “inclusive growth” (hereafter IG) and “resource efficiency and ecosystem management” (hereafter RE). Six of these (14 %) have been lead partner of a project. There was only one institution that worked on projects of both thematic fields (Institute of Alpine Research in Grenoble). Across the two thematic fields, both projects and institutions were equally distributed (14 projects from each field, 28 and 29 project participations for IG and RE respectively). Yet, remarkably, the majority of institutions only contributed to one project (77 per cent), and only two institutions participated in 3 or 4 projects (IRSTEA Mountain Ecosystems research unit in Grenoble and the LIRIS Laboratory in Lyon). Overall, French institutions participated 57 times over the period.

The distribution of French partners across projects is heterogeneous. Most of the projects involved one or two institutions. Eight projects, however, involved 3 or even 4 institutions from the French stakeholder landscape; a fact that points at high interest for the specific issues of these projects and rather strong networks at regional and local level.

Most important facts

- both thematic fields have been equally distributed across projects and institutions
- 77 per cent of the partners only contributed to one project, but 8 projects involved 3 or even 4 French institutions
- 14 per cent of all institutions have been lead partner
- more than 80 per cent of the institutions belong to the public sector, mainly at regional and local level, but diversity of work areas and institution types
- 25 per cent of all stakeholders are either research institutes or universities
- main fields of work are spatial development and spatial planning, development of mountain territories, environmental science, forestry and health and bio-technologies
- 95 per cent of institutions comes from the AS programme area
- three quarters of participating institutions situated in the Rhône-Alpes administrative region
- more than half of the institutions are considered to have a low impact on spatial development
- stronger impacts on spatial development come from the regional and local level; one quarter of all institutions has at least medium impact on the local level
- several networks of institutions through AS, but only one large network with strong influence on spatial development

Branche, types and areas of work

Given the variety of topics among projects, the variety of French stakeholders in institution types and areas of work across the two thematic fields is not surprising. Although we can identify 14 types of institutions, more than 80 per cent of the project partners belong to the public sector. The AS programme seems to have principally importance for the public sphere. NGOs together with public authorities account for 36 per cent of partners alone. Research institutes or universities make up another 25 per cent. Actors from the economic sphere play a minor role. Accordingly, the main areas of work concern wider public policy, spatial planning and development of mountain territories. Environmental sciences, forestry and natural hazards also appear frequently. Rhône-Alpes has a large sector of bio- and health technologies, and three projects (NATHCARE, ALIAS, ALPS Bio-Cluster) involved both local networks and clusters that explain the areas of work of health care and related technologies. The analysis showed larger categories of other types (for instance municipality, cluster or protected area) and other work areas (for instance transport, energy or tourism), confirming a generally diverse landscape of stakeholders.

Spatial distribution

Some spatial disparities become apparent when we look at the spatial distribution of project participation for the two thematic fields. The majority of projects involved participants from the Isere (11) and Rhone (12) departments, the French NUTS 3 level. The institutions in these two NUTS3 territories account for almost 50 per cent of project participations. Institutions from other departments, particularly in the Southern French Alps, on the Mediterranean coast and in the Ain department, did contribute to the projects to a much lesser extent. At a higher level, Rhône-Alpes administrative region, accounting for almost three quarters of project participations, outperforms the two other AS regions Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur (4 participations) and Franche-Comté (6 participations). Unsurprisingly, the majority of institutions was situated in the area of the AS programme (93 %), 44 per cent of which even within the area of the alpine convention. Only one institution (2.2 %) joined an AS project from other areas in France, outside the alpine perimeters (ONF International, situated in Paris but ONF has also regional delegations).

Influence on sustainable spatial development

We (qualitatively) estimated influences on spatial development at the main scale of intervention for every institution. Most of the French partners in AS projects operate at regional (22) or local level (15), which is in line with the objectives of the AS programme to operate specifically at regional and local level in order to foster territorial cohesion. Nevertheless, more than half of the total of institutions is considered to have lower influences on spatial development. Only two institutions on international level have medium or strong impacts respectively (European Association of elected representatives from Mountain regions and the Committee for the European Transalpine Link). On the national level, no institution with higher impact participated in the projects. Influences on spatial development are considered highest for regional and local level: 17 institutions from these scales are considered to have at least a medium influence on spatial development. One quarter of all institutions has at least medium impact on the local level. Globally, strong impact institutions appear to be lacking at all spatial scales.

Interpretation

The analysis revealed notable imbalances in the group of French institutions that participated in AS projects of the two thematic fields.

First, participation is not equally distributed across the French alpine territory. Notable concentrations are situated in the Isere and Rhône departments, other especially southern territories lagging behind. This might have different reasons. Politically, the northern French Alps are more oriented towards the Alps (also in a transnational perspective) and also to the centres of gravity of the European economy (concept of the blue banana), whereas the Southern Alps are more oriented towards the Mediterranean Sea and the coast. Mountainous zones in the South are less populated, economically less prosperous and more marginal. In addition, economic activity and population create higher perceived pressures in the Northern French Alps, and might contribute to an advanced political and societal understanding of spatial development and natural resource management as contemporary challenges.

Second, although spatial development and spatial policies appear frequently as main fields of work of the considered stakeholders, the majority of them has low influence on alpine spatial development, especially on transnational scale. On regional and local scales, various stakeholders, e.g. the regional authorities and large intermunicipal syndicates, have a rather determining influence on spatial development in the Alps. Research institutes and universities appear frequently in the projects, but their influence may be seen as rather low, or indirect. Although the state and the regions create incentives and create the framework for regional and local development, the major operational level of spatial planning and development initiatives is situated on the local level (municipalities, intermunicipal syndicates, city regions, parks). Hence, if the AS wants to promote sustainable spatial development on the operational level, it would necessarily have to increase the share of local authorities without compromising the participation of higher decision-making levels.

Third, the group of French institutions is largely dominated by the public sphere. An increase in private enterprises might enlarge the scope, facilitate exchanges and increase performance of alpine (spatial) development. For instance, AS projects might reinforce the territorial anchorage of enterprises and inversely raise their awareness for alpine issues. Fourth, and according to the requirements of the operational programme, relatively few institutions participated from areas outside the AS. In the perspective of an enlarged and permeable AS network, it could be desirable to include human capital and knowledge from areas outside the programme area.

Last, and in more general terms, a major problem that became apparent throughout the analysis is related to constraints of stakeholders to participate in AS projects, notably in terms of human capital, expertise and financial resources. Project participants are generally larger institutions and structures, who are able to fulfil the project management requirements. Participation of smaller institutions, both from the public and private sphere, should be facilitated in order to diversify the AS network. In a nutshell, the analysis of French stakeholders has shown a sensitive lack operational partners on the ground across the AS projects, capable of implementing change towards sustainable spatial development. The table below summarizes these results in an action matrix, defining appropriate actions for different groups of stakeholders based on their participation and interest in alpine spatial development.

Keep involved: strong participation, weak interest	Engage closely: strong participation, strong interest
all stakeholders that already participated and have lower interest, e.g. SMEs, research institutes not directly working on Alpine topics	Research institutes, universities, NGOs, Public authorities, policy-makers
Raise awareness: weak participation, weak interest	Motivate: weak participation, strong interest
private sector enterprises, outer alpine stakeholders	municipalities, intermunicipal syndicates, protected areas, city regions, small and medium-sized public and private actors

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