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Possible paths towards sustainable tourism development in a high-mountain resort

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Laurent Arcuset

EDITOR'S NOTE

Translation: Brian Keogh

- 1 In 2004, Valloire¹, along with five other natural areas, each with different problems², became part of a survey to assess the sustainability of tourism practices. The survey was conducted by the Agence Française d'Ingénierie Touristique (French Agency for Tourism Engineering), the Caisse des Dépôts and the Ligue Urbaine et Rurale (French government initiative to promote French heritage, the living environment and sustainable development). At a time when the application of sustainable development principles to tourism was figuring increasingly in discussions, technical publications and conferences, this experimental approach at the national scale was intended to provide an in-field evaluation of how the fundamental values of sustainable tourism were being taken into account: controlled development of the local area and its economy, balanced distribution of spin-off effects (that must benefit the local population), emergence of activities that respect the environment and are not wasteful of natural resources. With a view to providing decision-makers and operators willing to commit to sustainability with an operational and practical tool, the national study “to evaluate tourism practices with respect to sustainable development” thus concerned above all “the way of assessing and orienting tourism activities and projects with a view to better implementing the requirements of sustainable development” (Baldié et al, 2006). In this exploratory phase, it was decided to experiment in six very different territories in terms of their attraction as a tourist destination (industrial, urban, rural, cultural,

coastal, mountain), practices and/or projects (industrial or diffuse practices, specific or general projects, diversified or mono-activity tourism economy), and commitment with regard to sustainable development (process beginning, in progress, or non-existent).

- 2 Each of the areas selected had to agree to an evaluation by a research agency. The technical specifications of the call for tender sent out to 21 research agencies emphasized the importance of characterizing the “local atmosphere”³, defining the “stakes of sustainability” and collectively constructing a “reference framework for sustainable development” (AFIT, 2004). Although the method of evaluation was not imposed, the research agencies selected were requested to adopt a participatory approach that enabled the different actors concerned by the sustainability assessment to be contacted and mobilised. The approach comprised two phases. The first concerned an individual evaluation of the six selected areas. Based on the information obtained, a collective phase was then conducted to determine an operational framework for analysis intended both for decision-makers who wish to take into account the requirements of sustainable development when setting up their tourism projects and for operators needing to determine the return on their investments in the light of territorial sustainability requirements.
- 3 The areas concerned were, in principle, supposed to participate voluntarily, but Valloire was initially nominated by the national organisation committee, then selected following discussion between both parties: locally elected representatives agreed to an evaluation of the resort, but expertise was technically and financially supported by the AFIT and its partners. The choice of the national committee was dictated by the interest that the resort represents as a model: a village resort at the beginning of the 20th century, Valloire was then converted during the 2000s to a “skiing factory” by the explosion of rental accommodation linked to the effects of the Loi Demessine⁴ (+3500 beds between 2004 and 2005, in the form of tourist accommodation) and the extension of the ski area and its “modernisation”, characterised in particular by the installation of snow-making machines on a massive scale. These two developments are “genetically” related in that it is the real estate programmes through their direct financial input and the increased clientele they generate which are supposed to ensure the profitability of ski area development, which in turn increases the attraction of real estate for the public. One of the two research agencies responsible for the feasibility studies of the Unités Touristiques Nouvelles (New Tourism Units) designed to provide tourism accommodation (IRAP, 2002) explained as follows *“The attraction of Valloire must benefit from a two-fold process: a resort providing rental accommodation for 10,000 visitors, including 3000 recent beds catering entirely to the needs of today’s consumer, a resort offering new skiing possibilities in a new area but connected to the rest of the ski area (translation).”* It is thus a model that is *a priori* somewhat removed from the principles of sustainable development (Arcuset et al., 2008), particularly since Valloire has also made a name for itself by hosting emblematic national and international motorised ATV (all-terrain vehicle) meetings: since 1992, the Transvalquad, the biggest quad meeting in Europe, and since 2001, the ATV Fair, which attracts more than 15,000 visitors each year.
- 4 The question of sustainable development – resulting from the 2004 study, for which the author of this article was a consultant (Arcuset, Arnal, 2004) – appeared, however, as one of the main issues of the last municipal elections, which resulted in a change of mayor, if not of political orientation. The aim of this article is thus to identify the conditions for the emergence of the theme of sustainable development (issues,

stakeholders concerned, governance) and to examine the difference between the discourses pronounced and the actions undertaken. The latter will involve specifically questioning the link, and apparent incompatibility, between proclaimed ambitions and the persistence of the same classical model of tourism development based on the interdependence of the expansion and modernisation of the ski area's technical equipment on the one hand, and the growth of tourism real estate on the other.

An assessment of the sustainability practices of a resort that has recently undergone a phase of intense tourism growth

- 5 Valloire was a pioneer first-generation resort, celebrating its 100th anniversary a few years ago, and for a long time developed as a village resort, having really taken off in the inter-war period with the installation of a ski school by the Ski Club Parisien. Starting from the main hamlet, the gradual transformation of the village took place with the development of hotels and successive extensions to the ski area accompanied by its increasing mechanisation, not forgetting the installation of numerous second homes, which represented 72% of total tourist accommodation in 1999 and still around 60% in 2001. During the period of steady growth, the control of development remained mainly in the hands of native-born villagers, who managed their own land and property portfolios, created most of the companies, and took charge of the development of a resort controlled by three municipal departments (ski lifts, water and electricity).
- 6 The turning point for this medium-sized resort, at the scale of the Alps, and the first resort of the Maurienne region, was thus relatively recent. At the beginning of the 2000s, realising that the village was relatively under-equipped for tourism⁵, the municipal team chose to adopt “*a model of profitability based on the proportionality relationship between the stock of accommodation and ski lift capacity (translation)*” (François, Marcelpoil, 2008) and started a vast programme to provide more beds. Seizing the opportunity provided by the Loi Demessine, the municipality undertook to create, with the help of property developers and then outside managers, two Unités Touristiques Nouvelles (New Tourism Units) corresponding to 4,700 new beds, 3,500 of which were delivered in 2004-2005 in three- and four-star tourist apartments. Today, the resort boasts a total of some 17,000 beds (41% more than in 2001) for a ski area offering 150 km of downhill runs situated in the communes of Valloire and Valmeinier, whose ski areas were linked up in 1987. In 2009, two new black runs were announced for two new sectors. Equipment includes 2 cable cars, 9 chair lifts and 11 drag lifts, providing for a peak-load capacity of 42,000 skiers per hour for the ski area as a whole, as well as 400 snow-making machines, the first of which date back to 1989⁶. To provide water for snow-making, Valloire built one of the largest hill dams in the Alps in 2007 (Creys du Quart with a 250,000 m³ capacity) and a snow-making plant downstream.
- 7 Somewhat paradoxically, it was at the moment when the resort chose this path of massive development, thereby breaking with the measured growth of preceding decades, that it found itself participating in a national survey. After a preliminary review (consultation of locally available data and studies, and field studies), a sampling method was proposed to “measure the diversity of stakeholders” before launching the

consultation phase. A total of some 20 actors were surveyed using in-depth interviews. Fifteen interviewees lived and worked in Valloire, while the five “outsiders” were administrative and political representatives and investors, including one property developer and a tourist apartment manager.

- 8 The consultation resulted in the identification of four major issues, to be used as guidelines in constructing a reference framework for supervising the resort’s sustainable tourism development (objectives, priority actions, indicators, etc.). These relatively classic issues were validated by the local supervisory committee, then debated at four workshops that brought together technicians from the AFIT and the Caisse des Dépôts, on the one hand, and stakeholders representing the different interests involved on the other (elected representatives, directors of services and government departments, property developers, representatives from the accommodation sector, resource persons). Consultations during the workshop on activity diversification resulted in identifying the need for developing local heritage resources and getting back to a “village resort” ambience. Indeed, the village atmosphere was tending to disappear, and this was intentional, in favour of the image of the “real resort”. In the workshop on control of land and property development, the desire was expressed to no longer launch major property developments but to optimize existing accommodation and improve the resort’s urban functions. The landscape and spatial management workshop led to a decision to put in place tools that would help everyone get involved in working on the quality of the living environment for all local residents – and not only the skiers – and to facilitate the cohabitation of different spatial users (stock breeders, hikers, sports enthusiasts). Finally, the workshop on water, energy and waste management revealed the complete confidence of local actors in the capacity of the resort to deal with these questions, despite the lack of precise data on the real needs at peak periods and the absence of coordination among the tourism, water and electricity authorities. During the four workshops, the question of the quality of the decision-making process, or more generally that of “local atmosphere” (using the rhetoric of the actors) or “governance” (in a more conceptual approach), which came up several times during the consultation phase, was systematically raised in debates, bringing into play the nature of relations between stakeholder groups and thereby identifying both past and present political malfunctioning and shortcomings.
- 9 At the beginning of the evaluation, Valloire did not, in fact, have any collective culture of sustainable development, and the village even appeared considerably removed from it in that stakeholders’ comments associated the “sustainability” of the resort above all to its economic growth. Furthermore, the municipality has chosen to manage its area like a company, adopting the catch phrase “Valloire Entreprise” to ensure “*an increase in the number of visitors to the resort in winter, at both peak and off-peak periods, as well as in summer, while at the same time making the resort more upmarket (translation)*”⁷. Over the years, the municipality has thus acquired considerable know-how in acting in the short term and ensuring the development of the resort, providing technical solutions capable of simultaneously supporting the addition of 3500 new beds, improvements to the ski area, and the development of the village centre, at the risk of forgetting, in following this entrepreneurial approach to resort management, that the “*nature of their role and their objectives clearly differentiates them from an exclusively private organisation (translation)*” (Ribalaygua, Saz, 2008). However, as the results of the consultation show, the collective culture of cooperation is still very limited, the policy of information and

internal communication (in the true sense of the term: transmit, link up, share) is found to be sorely lacking, and the local actors, including the municipality, are finding it difficult to meet the first requirement of sustainable development, which is to plan for the long term. As S. Clarimont and V. Vlès (2008) have observed: *“the consideration of the long term and the environmental impact of development projects is the basis of sustainable development theories (translation)”*. But faced with this requirement, *“political impatience all the tasks directed towards that which is lucrative and short-term are at work to prevent thinking about the long term (translation)”* (Laurent, 2008).

Uncertainties and shortcomings of the tourism growth model: a debate that has been avoided

- 10 In the absence of any custom of organizing debates to discuss different points of view, generally regarded as one of the foundations of sustainable territorial development (Dufau, Blessig, 2005), decisions depend almost exclusively on the mayor and the municipal council⁸. The problems raised by specialists as early as the beginning of the 2000s, and taken up again locally by the association Valloire Nature Et Avenir⁹ in its open denunciation of a project likely to jeopardise the economic, social and environmental balance of Valloire, have only been expressed in a somewhat marginal form of conflict among local actors, without any real weight in the decision-making process¹⁰.
- 11 When the selected options for growth are examined, however, there are numerous questions relating to the short and medium term. Impact studies conducted in 2002 for the two new tourism units do not objectively take into account the social and environmental dimensions – particularly the issues relating to water management and changes in the precipitation regime¹¹. The reason for this can be found in? *“political impatience”*, as suggested by the *a posteriori* analysis of one of the property developers: *“In the beginning, there was political will and a decision to create a ZAC (integrated development zone) to attract property developers. Feasibility studies conducted upstream (of development) were certainly lacking on the non-technical aspects”* so that *“there was no overall project when we arrived (translation)”* (Arcuset, Arnal, 2004), and even less of an overall project for the long term. Thus the development project for the resort, which no document defines with precision, does not take into account the issue of global warming and its impacts. On this subject, in 2003 and 2004, during the evaluation and then the local debates organised by the “Association pour l’Éducation Populaire”, the responses provided by resort officials appeared reassuring, arguing that 70% of the ski area is situated above 2,000 metres and that the large-scale installation of snow canons will enable the resort to technically adapt to this phenomenon. But this largely ignores the recent projections put forward by the Centre d’Étude de la Neige (Snow Study Centre) which show that below 2,500 metres there is a strong risk of the snow/rain ratio decreasing, while a rise in temperatures would also reduce the resort’s snow-making capacity (Alpmedia, 2004). On a less serious note, but just as significant, it has been observed that the vegetation is becoming less attractive, so much so that one local official attending a workshop suggested that it may be advantageous to replace the larch trees around the resort – which are deciduous and therefore lose their needles in winter – with fir trees, thereby creating a landscape more in keeping with visitors’ expectations.

- 12 From an economic point of view, a long-term approach is also lacking. With the concept of furnished holiday apartments, guarantees in terms of marketing only cover a period of nine years, creating some uncertainty about leases being renewed, while investments in ski lifts are paid off over at least 20 years. In addition, keen competition between resorts increases investment risks by calling into question visitor forecasts and thus the expected revenues with which to pay back loans. This competition is not only from more distant resorts but also from other resorts in the Maurienne region. Here, thanks in part to the loi Demessine, the addition of more than 11,000 new beds has been planned (Finas, 2003), which represents, if we include those of Valloire, more than a third of total rental property, and this in a market which is considered to be mature (François, Marcelpoil, 2008)¹².
- 13 This situation appears even more alarming given that at the beginning of the 2000s, neither at the scale of the Maurienne valley nor that of the community of communes that Valloire¹³ belongs to, was there any common tourism development strategy, and certainly no consideration of sustainability, despite the strong links between the resorts and the valley regarding social, economic and environmental questions (Chardonnel, 1999). And yet the *“challenge of sustainable tourism in mountain areas is also that of integrated territorial development. Is it not at the scale of the valley that all the questions relating to a tourism strategy and economic development must be considered and addressed? (translation)”* (Uhaldeborde, 2008). Instead, we are witnessing, as elsewhere in the Alps, *“a spatial scattering of project developers”* due to a *“lack of territorial planning”*. This is caused mainly by the disengagement of the State, one of the perverse effects of the Loi Montagne (Mountain law)¹⁴, and by the lack of local solidarity within the same valley, an observation also made by S. Clarimont and V. Vlès (2009) with respect to the Pyrenees. In a study conducted for the village of Valloire, it was noted that: *“The ZRR (rural regeneration area) law is going to do more harm than we think in the Maurienne. The managers are not sufficiently in touch with real estate aspects. They are going to sell their “accommodation and ski pass” package deals so cheaply that the resorts won’t be able to maintain the installations nor cover the investment in snow-making equipment”* (translation) (Finas, 2003).

A significant commitment to sustainability ... which disregards tourism aspects

- 14 In 2004, after evaluation of its tourism practices with regard to sustainability, the village of Valloire stated its desire to adopt a new attitude to sustainable development. Several initiatives were rapidly taken, particularly with regard to the environment: signing of a charter initiated by the departmental council of Savoie aimed at eliminating plastic bags from supermarkets and neighbourhood stores; setting up a free, cleanshuttleservice; improving selective waste sorting, etc. In terms of the decision-making process, the municipality of that time undertook to adopt a participatory approach in drawing up its town planning documents¹⁵ - an approach that resulted in organising a few consultation meetings in the hamlets - and it created a special sustainable development commission working in cooperation with other commissions. In addition, it promoted discussion on sustainable development themes with the help of the local network of associations (and particularly the Association pour l'Education Populaire). It is in this context that a local Agenda 21¹⁶ was set up in 2004.

- 15 The importance of the question of sustainable development to Valloire was also manifest at the last municipal elections (9 and 16 March 2008) in the programmes of the different electoral lists (three lists, two candidates standing together and two standing alone). In the programme for the list “Valloire Passionnement” of the outgoing mayor, sustainable development was one of the three major issues but no mention was found of the notion of governance. The winning list, “Pour Valloire”, chose the slogan “*shared sustainable development*” and stated its aim as being to work in “*a transparent manner for development that is sustainable and shared*”, “transparent” being the only word underlined. Of the five major issues mentioned, one concerned “sustainable development and controlled urbanisation”, another “governance”, and the last the “Agenda 21”.
- 16 The notion of sustainability, however, is absent from the “tourism” issue and, in terms of both style and substance, there is no break in relation to the previous team. In the first news sheet from the relatively new municipal team¹⁷ (October 2008), we learn that the village has bought two electric vehicles, that it is going to upgrade its public lighting to limit the environmental impact, and that it has set up a steering committee to establish the Agenda 21 – all decisions that had already been taken by the previous municipal team. But at the same time, it is also clearly stated that the ATV fair must grow in 2009¹⁸, and that SEM Valloire¹⁹ is going to conduct a debate on the future of the resort based on “*the creation of new commercial accommodation to generate additional turnover* (translation)” and to finance the investments planned in the coming years: thus, turnover will increase from 11 to 18 million euros over the next seven years²⁰. Recently the municipality has announced that it is going to create a slalom course specifically for “*training and the organisation of regional, national and international competitions* (translation).” In a letter of October 2008, the municipal council of Valloire briefly presented this project to certain landowners to request their authorisation to install a run and two lifts on a site that has so far been untouched by development. The project will cost several million euros and will undoubtedly impact on the landscape and the environment. These are all decisions that seem to be orienting resort development in a different direction to that of the resorts that have signed up to the National Charter in favour of Sustainable Development in Mountain Resorts (Charte Nationale en faveur du Développement Durable dans les Stations de Montagne), prepared by the National Association of Mayors of Mountain Resorts, of which, it is true, Valloire is not a member.
- 17 Although it is still too soon, less than a year after the elections, to evaluate the commitments made in terms of sustainable development, a few valuable insights have already been gained. It is certainly through “fear of losing market share” (Saz Gil, Crus Ribalaygua, 2008) and of weakening a sector that represents directly or indirectly about 95% of local jobs, that tourism in its widest sense – activities, areas, accommodation – has not been included in discussions on sustainable development. So far, discussions have mainly involved a few urban management measures, without questioning the model of tourism development adopted. In the absence of any real policy for sustainable tourism, actions undertaken in favour of sustainability and the environment concern basic urban functions – transport, energy, waste, etc. – as is the case in other urban communities, whether or not they are in the mountains. In this field it is true that substantial means have been made available, and there have been some real achievements (Arcuset et al, 2008): free, clean shuttle services, new town hall

meeting high environmental quality requirements, solar panels on the municipal technical centre, green energy supply (250 MWh/yr), recovery of rainwater from communal garages, etc.

- 18 In terms of its marketing position, although Valloire would like to figure in the second edition of the Guide Vert (Green Guide) of mountain resorts (2007-2008)²¹, the resort's official site only gives information, somewhat typically, on the number of activities that can be practised, the size of the ski area, and the number of snow-making units, an approach that tends to "*favour behaviour oriented towards frenzied activity and over-consumption of resources, goods and services (translation)*" (Bourdeau, Berthelot, 2008). There is thus a real risk that Valloire will follow a path that will result in it losing its distinctive character and its village resort heritage, and that will bring it closer to a "dream factory", mostly under the influence of an increasing dependence on major global tourism operators (Bourdeau, Berthelot, 2008)²² such as Odalys, Pierre & Vacances, Eurogroup and Lagrange, which are all present in Valloire.
- 19 Only a change in decision-making practices will make it possible to promote sustainable tourism development in an effective manner (Clarimont, Vlès, 2008) through the establishment of a mechanism whereby a diversity of opinions can be heard and where short, medium and long-term requirements can be taken into account. But "*the major question concerns how to change the organisation of the resort to orient it towards improving the quality of life and welfare of the local population (translation)*" (Saz Gil, Crus Ribalaygua, 2008). Although there are tools to promote this type of debate – first and foremost the local Agenda 21 and the Local Development Plan (PLU) in conformity with the Territorial Coherence Scheme (Schéma de Cohérence Territoriale or SCOT) and the objectives fixed in the Sustainable Planning and Development Programme (PADD) – , there is no universal method that can take into account an area's specific characteristics and the peculiarities of local populations. It is therefore necessary to invent a special participatory process each time, enabling discussion among the different actors concerned. In tourist destinations that attract the interest of major economic operators, such as ski resorts, it is important to go beyond the standard approaches, which can be used anywhere, in order to specify the main objectives of sustainable development for the area and to prepare strategic and operational documents. It is important to propose an original *joint structure* where local decision-makers and outside operators share their projects (general strategy and regulatory tools/ market study and business plan), exchange opinions (general interest / private interests), and work together to define their respective roles within a framework of shared responsibility. It is on this condition that a check can be made to see if there is a virtuous relationship between territory and project, with, on one side, a territory capable of hosting a project that is socially useful and respectful of its environment and, on the other, a project that is economically viable but also capable of being integrated locally. The same goes for the vital need to ensure the ongoing education of all the actors concerned (and maybe more especially of the locally elected representatives so that, in an increasingly complex context, they can systematically take into account the four aspects of sustainable development²³. Progress remains limited and the change in the development paradigm has not yet taken place. However, two factors seem likely to push through the changes that have already begun. The first is the gradual involvement of actors in the environmental culture as they start to participate in these procedures – as D. Levet underlines "*now [in Valloire] there is a debate between the actors of the local area who before had been unable, almost from an*

ideological viewpoint, to communicate (translation)” (2008) – even if they have perhaps only been encouraged by the fact that it is now “fashionable” to do so. The second concerns the painful need to adapt the model if, in the coming years, it is shown to be fragile from both an economic and environmental point of view.

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NOTES

1. Valloire, situated in the Upper Maurienne region of the French Alps, numbers almost 1,300 inhabitants (1,243 in the 1999 census). It varies in altitude from 685 to 3,514 m. The main town is situated at 1,403 m, where most economic activity is concentrated.
2. The Baie de Somme, Petite-Rosselle on the Carreau Wendel mine site, the Bande Rhénane, the commune of Pérouges, the community of communes of Lanvollon-Plouha.
3. The local atmosphere may be defined as “the invisible and the intangible which are the essential components of the relationship, whether or not this is commercial (translation)” (Laurent, 2008). The quality of discussion, action and partnerships depends on the nature of this.
4. The purpose of the Loi Demessine is to develop tourism in the Zones de Revitalisation Rurale (Rural Regeneration Areas) through a tax exemption scheme.
5. A feasibility study for one of the two UTN, that of Charbonnières (IRAP, 2002), points out that “With a maximum of 1,000 to 1,500 beds that meet today’s standards of rental accommodation, Valloire is under-equipped to take on a good marketing and property development policy (translation)”
6. There has been sustained development of snow-making facilities in recent years, with 266 units in 2002, 363 in 2004, and more than 400 today.

7. Commune of Valloire, 2003.
8. In 2004, a municipal councillor regretted that: *“within the municipal council, nobody supervises us. We have too much power. We make very quick decisions on investments that involve millions of euros (translation)”* (Arcuset, Arnal, 2004).
9. Association created in 2004, which in 2008 had 250 members comprising people from both Valloire and outside the commune. Two of its active members stood together in the last municipal elections under the banner “Valloire 21”, each obtaining about a hundred votes out of a total of 911.
10. Dominique Levet, professor of political science specialising in environmental issues and sustainable development, and founder and director of the Institut Européen du Développement Durable (European Institute for Sustainable Development), which since 2003 has participated in the cultural week organised by the village, observed in 2008: *“In five years, the theme of sustainable development has gradually become part of local debate, whereas in the beginning it was met with indifference, if not hostility (translation)”*.
11. A regional daily paper featured an article in September 2006 entitled “Rocks were floating on the mud” which reported on flooding that affected the village for the fourth time in five months. It was then announced that the village was going to have to undertake substantial repair work and invest heavily in flood prevention measures.
12. In 2004, the mayor of Valmeinier admitted: *“you have to be strong to go and take customers from other resorts, since all the studies say that visitor rates are stagnating (translation)”* (Arcuset, Arnal, 2004).
13. Valloire is part of the Maurienne Galibier community of communes which includes 6 communes and 3 resorts (Valloire, Valmeinier and Orelle).
14. *“The communes (villages) are the authorities that organise tourism activities, the “Mountain Law” having confirmed the political legitimacy of the elected representative in this area. The same institution is thus responsible for the political leadership of the village and the supervision of development ... this type of organisation today constitutes a factor that makes development more fragile and can even hinder development” (translation)”* (Gerbaux, 2008).
15. In 2002, the preparation of a Plan Local d’Urbanisme (Local Development Plan) and a Zone de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural, Urbain et Paysager (Architectural, urban and landscape heritage protection zone) was announced. Today the Local Development Plan is still under discussion, with the village regularly voting on modifications to the POS (Land Use Plan) to help its projects advance.
16. *“The local Agenda 21 is an action programme for the 21st century focusing on sustainable development. Its main role is to combat poverty and social exclusion, produce sustainable goods and services, and protect the environment”* (Ministère de l’Ecologie, de l’Energie, du Développement Durable et de l’Aménagement du territoire, 2009).
17. In the new municipal team, 7 elected representatives out of 15 were already municipal councillors from the previous mandate.
18. *“To improve visitor rates, you need to perhaps consider changing dates or extending the event so that it covers two weekends (translation)”*, Valloire Information Bulletin, October 2008.
19. In 2007, an SEM (semi-public company) replaced Valloire’s Régie Touristique (Valloire tourism department) to ensure the durability of the ski area. It is chaired jointly by the mayor and an elected representative from the opposition party who carried out this function before the elections.
20. In 2003, a study revealed that the commune had a debt ratio far superior to the national average for mountain resorts and observed that *“maximum indebtedness seems to have been reached. It is only an increase in turnover that is supporting investment.... and, by a leverage effect, the debt of the investment programme (translation)”* (ESCP-EAP, 2003).

21. The Guide Vert is published by the Mountain Riders association. For Valloire, 32 points are listed under 7 headings. Under the heading of planning and development, it is stated that *"the Agenda 21 procedure is under discussion and a working group on sustainable development is being set up"*. But in the third edition (2008-2009), this note has disappeared.

22. In 2004, one of the managers observed: *"The future of Valloire does not depend on us... It's not our problem. We are in a free-market economy where everyone defends his own interests. Ours is to get established and to make a profit (translation)"* (Arcuset, Arnal, 2004).

23. *"Rethinking sustainable development in terms of links means thinking about relationships, that is not reducing the complexity and multi-dimensionality of situations to isolated characteristics, catalogues of principles, disciplinary knowledge, watertight compartments and partitioned sectors (translation)"* (Laurent, 2008).

ABSTRACTS

This text starts from the teachings stemming from an evaluation of the tourist practices in the light of sustainable tourism principles, realized in 2004 within the framework of a national network piloted by the French Agency of Touristic Engineering (today ODIT France), for the ski resort of Valloire, first-generation resort in the Maurienne, which development and modernization in the 2000s kept pace with a vast real estate program. The article investigates the stakes and difficulties of the implementation of sustainable development in Valloire, asks the question of the "cultural revolution" which the actors should achieve to change the model of economic development, and suggest some tracks to reach there. The local approach of "sustainable tourism", indeed, seems for the moment rather to aim - as in many other high mountain ski resorts - towards a more environmental management of the basic urban functions than a real questioning of a tourist model based upon the triptych development of the ski slopes, securizing of the snow resource and touristic real estate programs.

Ce texte part des enseignements issus d'une évaluation des pratiques touristiques à l'aune des principes du tourisme durable, réalisée en 2004 dans le cadre d'un réseau national piloté par l'Agence Française d'Ingénierie Touristique (aujourd'hui ODIT France), pour la station de Valloire, station de première génération de Maurienne dont le développement et la modernisation dans les années 2000 sont allés de pair avec un vaste programme immobilier. L'article explore les enjeux et les difficultés de la mise en œuvre du développement durable à Valloire, pose la question de la « révolution culturelle » que les acteurs devraient accomplir pour changer de modèle de développement économique, et suggère quelques pistes pour y parvenir. L'approche locale du « tourisme durable », en effet, semble pour l'heure plutôt tendre - comme dans bien d'autres stations de haute montagne - vers une gestion plus environnementale des fonctions urbaines de base que vers une véritable remise en cause d'un modèle touristique reposant sur le triptyque développement du domaine skiable, sécurisation de la ressource neige et programmes immobiliers de tourisme.

INDEX

Mots-clés: station de ski, tourisme durable, Valloire, Maurienne, loi Demessine, résidence de tourisme, évaluation de projet de station, gouvernance, logiques d'acteurs

Keywords: ski resort, sustainable tourism, Valloire, Maurienne, Demessine act, tourism residence, ski resort project evaluation, governance, actor logic

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