Societal Opposition to Tourism-Related Development in the Hautes-Pyrénées: a Missed Opportunity for Territorial Innovation?

Sylvie Clarimont and Vincent Vlès

Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/rga/3258>

DOI: 10.4000/rga.3258

ISSN: 1760-7426

This article is a translation of:

Les contestations sociales du développement touristique dans les Hautes-Pyrénées : le rendez-vous manqué de l'innovation territoriale ? - URL : <https://journals.openedition.org/rga/3218> [fr]

Publisher:

Association pour la diffusion de la recherche alpine, UGA Éditions/Université Grenoble Alpes

Electronic reference

Sylvie Clarimont and Vincent Vlès, "Societal Opposition to Tourism-Related Development in the Hautes-Pyrénées: a Missed Opportunity for Territorial Innovation?", *Journal of Alpine Research | Revue de géographie alpine* [Online], 104-1 | 2016, Online since 17 May 2016, connection on 08 December 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/rga/3258> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/rga.3258>

This text was automatically generated on 8 December 2022.

Creative Commons - Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International - CC BY-NC-ND 4.0
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Societal Opposition to Tourism-Related Development in the Hautes-Pyrénées: a Missed Opportunity for Territorial Innovation?

Sylvie Clarimont and Vincent Vlès

Introduction

- 1 Tourism and environmental protection are not always comfortable bedfellows. It is worth bearing in mind that tourism has often been – and sometimes still is – a force for environmental protection. The first tourist associations, whether federal (Touring Club de France, Club Alpin Français) or local in nature (regional initiatives, groups of shopkeepers and hoteliers), played a major role in the institutionalisation of rules to protect sites and areas of exceptional natural interest (Selmi, 2009). Later on, during the democratisation of leisure activities in the post-war period, tourist facilities were constructed on a grand scale with little concern for the environment. In the mountains, the development model promoted by the government was based on cashing in on this ‘white gold rush’ and led to the emergence of various forms of local resistance in the 1960s that combined a rejection of state interventionism with a desire to protect natural resources. At present, the mountains are still the subject of many environmental conflicts – disputes in which tourism features prominently. This atmosphere of permanent conflict may seem paradoxical in an era where development policy has become more endogenous and the role of central government, weakened by successive phases of decentralisation, has been reduced to one of ‘regional coordinator’ (Donzelot, Estèbe, 1994) responsible for balancing public policies whose content is often beyond its direct control. Furthermore, the fact that the principles of sustainable development are incorporated (albeit partially) into new tourist facilities at the design stage (Clarimont *et al.*, 2008) should, at least in theory, limit the potential for environmental disputes. So how should we explain the resurgence of conflicts

regarding the expansion of ski resorts? Should we view them purely as manifestations of a reactionary resistance to change, or could they in fact be indicative of a climate conducive to innovation and new forms of regional dynamism?

- 2 Our article aims to address this particular question by looking at some of the conflicts arising from development projects in the Hautes-Pyrénées *département*, a region with numerous ski resorts (cf. Figure 1).¹ Approaching these conflicts with reference to the neo-Schumpeterian configurations of innovation (innovations in products, processes and organisational structures), we examine the relationships between the different parties and the stances adopted by those opposed to the proposed development. The research methodology applied here is based on the collation and analysis of operational files, planning applications, press articles, websites and 18 in-depth interviews with key figures from local political bodies, institutions and campaigning associations. These interviews allow us to better understand the way in which the stakeholders perceive the developmental dynamic of their region, their preferred types of project, the positioning of these projects within the overall development strategy they envisage, the stakes and issues attached to different projects and disputes, and the future prospects and consequences of these projects. A detailed analysis of these interviews is available online.²

The development of tourist facilities in the Pyrenees is still a topic of debate

- 3 The existing academic literature on the relationship between tourism and the environment falls into three broad categories: studies focusing on the environmental impact of tourism, those focusing on the way in which local communities perceive the impact of tourism on their lives and finally, those looking at collective movements connected with the development of tourism (Kousis, 2000). The latter phenomenon has emerged more recently as a topic of research and covers a broad spectrum of collective actions for and against tourism. Tourism is often invoked in campaigns against developments liable to have a negative impact on the tourist potential of an area, spoiling the landscape or generating other forms of discomfort (noise, odours etc.). While tourism is often just one of the many aspects of opposition to such construction work, it is sometimes a central issue, for example in popular tourist destinations. In such cases the concept of a 'tourist load capacity' (Newsome *et al.*, 2002) is used to justify the introduction of controls (Fagence, 1990, Vlès *et al.*, 2015) or to invoke the public interest (Dredge, 2010).
- 4 In mountainous areas, there are numerous and long-established forms of local resistance to tourism. These are often defined by their opposition to the creation or development of ski resorts. The 'Vanoise affair' (1969-1971), a conflict arising from plans announced by the Val Thorens ski resort to offer summer skiing on the Chavière glacier in the heart of the Vanoise National Park, was one of the first major confrontations between conservationists and backers of tourist development (Laslaz, 2005; Charvolin, 2012). While it remains the best-known conflict, it is by no means the only dispute of its kind. In the Pyrenees, the creation of protected zones came up against plans to create or expand winter sports resorts in the 1970s, which led to serious conflicts (national park projects, a project linking the Gourette and Artouste ski resorts via the Soussouéou plateau in the Ossau Valley; the construction of tourist

facilities in the Néouvielle National Nature Reserve, etc.). In the era of sustainable development and the 'greenification of our way of thinking' (Kalaora, 2001), the gradual decentralisation (since 1985) of procedures regulating development in the mountains, and particularly the authorisation process for new tourism units (UTNs in French),³ introduced in 1977, was intended to forestall or at least limit conflicts by reinforcing local governance. And yet, experience shows that in the Pyrenees the areas around winter sports resorts are still hotly disputed, with debates centring on the economic impact of winter sports (Marcelpoil, Langlois, 2006; Bourdeau, 2008; Vlès, 2014). The late 20th century saw prominent protests at the local level, at a time when the winter sports industry was coming in for severe criticism, and against the backdrop of climate change (D'Amico *et al.*, 2013). Across the Pyrenees, the obsolescence of existing accommodation facilities, the limited attractiveness of the resorts (the clientele remains primarily local), the modest size of the slopes and the unreliable weather conditions all combine to undermine the economic stability of the region's ski resorts (Cour des Comptes, 2015). Faced with these difficulties, the Pyrenean ski resorts have all opted for a strategy of 'adaptation' that involves modernising their accommodation facilities, developing artificial snow and expanding their slopes at higher altitudes.

Figure 1. Ski resorts in the Pyrenees

CARTOGRAPHY: MONIQUE MORALES/VINCENT VLÈS, 2015

- 5 For municipalities with a limited fiscal base, the very substantial investment required to modernise a ski resort needs to come with a guarantee of profitability in order to attract new clients. Decision-makers in mountain communities thus find themselves caught up in a rush to develop new facilities (George-Marcelpoil, 2002; Bourdeau, 2009; Fablet, 2015). In the interest of profitability, the obvious environmental impact of such work is dismissed. In the Hautes-Pyrénées, the resorts of Peyragudes and Saint-Lary were the first to invest on a massive scale in snow cannons in the 1990s, while also constructing new lifts. Speaking in 2000, Jean-Henri Mir, the mayor of Saint-Lary, explained that this facilities arms race was justified by the highly competitive nature of the sector: “In the near future, we will need to reinforce our snow guarantee by expanding the areas covered by snow cannons and by creating new ski trails at Arrouyes (...) and Aulon (...). We will also need to back up the iconic Pic Lumière ski lift with a new cable car system, which could start from behind the spa, which will also

need to be expanded with a new building. Last but not least, we need to renovate and restructure our tourist accommodation facilities – in some cases, that means taking two small apartments and turning them into one big one – in order to satisfy the demand from the market, which has changed completely” (*Sud-Ouest*, 03/02/2000). Such projects often require the organisation of a UTN planning permission consultation process. In these exchanges the debates between project backers and opponents are often intense, all the more so since the environment is no longer the only cause for concern in the Pyrenees: The development of substantial budget deficits and debt is a worry for civil society. The self-financing capacity of ski resorts is woefully insufficient, or even non-existent. Even balancing the books is no longer a possibility for half of these resorts (Cour des Comptes, 2015). These factors, at a time when the UTN procedure may potentially be abandoned and with conflicts erupting between local elected officials and associations dedicated to protecting the environment, feed into a debate that is increasingly complex.

Territorial mobilisation is fragmented but effective

- 6 In this context, the conflicts under consideration here share certain characteristics. Scarcely present in the media, and remaining local in their scope (micro-conflicts), these conflicts involve local residents organised into associations and often affiliated with France Nature Environnement (FNE) in a pyramidal but non-hierarchical structure.

Conflicts that attract little media coverage

- 7 The printed press is often a key source for research into territorial conflicts, used as a means of identifying contested projects and public spaces, identifying the stakeholders involved and the arguments for and against development proposals and reconstructing the conflict dynamic (Clarimont, 1996; Torre *et al.*, 2006). But as a source, the press also has a certain amount of bias: lack of consistency and thoroughness in the handling of information, selection of certain high-profile conflicts at the expense of others considered less likely to sell papers, partial (and sometimes partisan) representation of the differing points of view involved etc. Nonetheless, analysing the press does allow us to study the way in which protest movements garner media attention, and the mechanisms by which conflict situations are ‘revealed’ to the general public (Clarimont, 2006, 2013). Our research focused on the *Europresse* database. An initial search using the keywords ‘conflict’, ‘Pyrenees’ and ‘tourism’ proved to be too broad, as it turned up results that were often irrelevant (over 1,600 articles). A further search for UTNs revealed a high concentration of conflicts in the Hautes-Pyrénées *département*. It also revealed the relatively low media profile of these disputed developments: the creation of new reception facilities at Pont d’Espagne (Cauterets) and proposals to expand three ski resorts (Saint-Lary, Piau Engaly and Grand Tourmalet) were the most controversial projects. A search of the online archives of local paper *La Dépêche du Midi* confirmed the paltry media coverage of these conflicts, as it accounted for a tiny proportion of the 2,158 articles on the Pyrenees’ ski resorts. Over the period in question, 55 were about UTN projects and the opposition they sparked. The distribution of these articles over time was highly erratic, with a peak in 2011 that reflects the

strong mobilisation, within the *département*, against the Piau Engaly UTN project (Figure 2), outstripping similar protests in Cauterets, Luz and Gavarnie (see Figure 3).

Figure 2. Number of articles about UTN projects published in the *Dépêche du Midi* between 2000 and 2015

Figure 3. Places cited in the titles of UTN-related articles published in the *Dépêche du Midi* between 2000 and 2015

- 8 Thus, these conflicts received relatively little media attention. Indeed, in this context the relationship between opponents of tourist developments and the regional press appears to be less solid than it is elsewhere. The expansionary phase of the Pyrenean ski resorts created an environment that was hardly conducive to critical press coverage: “Everybody at *La Dépêche* had a season pass for Saint-Lary. Everybody on the board had a card. Some of them used it, and others didn’t, but it was hard to see a journalist coming for a free weekend at Saint-Lary and then writing an article on

Monday saying, ‘Mr. Mir, you’re going too far’” (interview with the President of the ADPSG – Association for the Defence and Protection of the Pyrenean Valleys of Saux and La Gélà – 04/07/2014). With the local press “sewn up”, it was national media outlets, both in print and on television, that began to express concern about the impact of tourism on the environment in the 1980s, offering a platform to certain militants and protesters: “I was lucky enough to meet a few journalists who have since become friends. They started coming down here all the time. And then, whenever there was a problem, the TV people would turn up. After that, the press had no choice but to come down (...) even if it was all sewn up before, at *Sud-Ouest* and *La Dépêche* etc., when the TV took that independent approach, the press had to follow” (President of the ADPSG). Today, the local press is much more likely to serve as a mouthpiece – however short-lived in nature – for the protest groups.

- 9 In the era of digital communication, the success of a movement is not only a matter of press coverage but also hinges upon its capacity to reach people via the Internet and social media. Opponents of development projects understand this, and campaigns rapidly create their own websites or blogs. The ADSPG created its website as soon as the association was formally established, and it went on to become an important ‘means of combat’. On a more modest scale, the associations Echocitoyen (Luz) and Cauterets Devenir both have blogs that are regularly updated by campaigners, “a free forum where different points of view can be expressed, and where the concerns we all have regarding the future of the planet are not neglected” (<http://echocitoyen-luz.org>, 20/10/2011). Websites and blogs allow these groups not only to share information regarding the project they are opposing but also to collect signatures, seek out expert advice and invite comments from campaigners opposed to projects that aim to expand and connect ski resorts.

Local associations focused primarily on opposing development

- 10 The conflicts surrounding tourist developments are limited in scope and generally remain at the level of local disputes rather than macro- or meso-conflicts. These conflicts rarely spread beyond the particular valley. The area concerned by the mobilisation corresponds to the zone affected by the proposed project. The conflict is focused on defending “specific local interests” (Lascoumes, 1994). The majority of these conflicts lead to the creation of a single-issue association and only rarely to the reactivation of a supervisory association (the Association Think, Propose and Act for Louron, ARPAL). But by integrating themselves into broader networks, these associations have boosted both their legitimacy and their expertise. However, few among them succeed in successfully implementing a strategy to raise their issue to a level of general interest, i.e. “a capacity to establish a link between specific things and general entities, characteristic of the legitimate instruments of justification forged by political communities” (Lafaye, Thévenot, 1993). Generally, these associations struggle to expand the scope of their actions and establish firm contacts with similar associations, whether in the Pyrenees or elsewhere. They present themselves as ‘local’ groups first and foremost, in the truest sense of the word: They represent the local people, who are proud of their identity as mountain-dwellers. Such localism is nothing new and was apparent during the initial struggles of the 1970s: “I’d founded an association, but just with people from Saint-Lary, because we were only fighting against what was going on at Saint-Lary; we were very, very local” (President of the ADPSG). In

January, the association 'Sauvons La Gélà' was created, and it adopted the same approach. The group's general assembly included only "people from the valley", and despite a subsequent decision to open it up to "outsiders", only "people from the valley" were involved in the decision-making process. Furthermore, these conflicts often take on a political dimension: The aim is to take control of the town council. In 2014, the protest associations Cauterets Devenir and Echocitoyen, opposed to the merging of Luz and Cauterets, presented candidates for the municipal elections in both towns. They won a majority in Luz-Saint Sauveur and three council seats in Cauterets.

A pyramidal, non-hierarchical structure

- 11 These associations are highly autonomous, the links between them are tenuous, and they rarely develop significant relationships with ecological movements on the other side of the border in Spain. In 2011, two associations were formed to fight the proposal to connect the resorts of Luz and Cauterets; they occasionally worked together but remained separate. Most associations opt to become affiliated with FNE 65, a general supervisory association, while retaining a high degree of financial and organisational autonomy. At the start of 2013, FNE 65 counted among its members 23 'local' or 'territorial' associations, of which a minority were in the Pyrenees. However, the public profile of FNE 65 remains low, which may explain the decision by certain associations (for example, Echocitoyen in Luz) not to join: "It's not necessarily that people refuse to join; it's just that they don't know us, they've never heard of us! Even if the FNE has been around in the *département* for 40 or 41 years, we've got a reputation with local politicians as troublemakers, people who come along to ruin projects, and the general public don't know us at all" (interview with the President of FNE 65, 01/12/2014.) The decision to join the FNE is often made more for pragmatic than ideological reasons. Affiliated groups often have a fairly limited understanding of the environmental movement. Their own political sympathies may be far removed from those of the ecological movement, and their involvement may be motivated by reasons not strictly related to defending the environment: "Our association is attracting more and more members with financial interests" (interview with FNE 65's mountain affairs coordinator, 11/03/2014).
- 12 The support offered by FNE 65 is invaluable, as it allows local associations to benefit from the advice and expertise of the departmental federation in matters of environmental campaigning and enables them to rapidly get up to speed on the workings of the French administrative system and the country's environmental laws. The Cauterets Devenir group, for example, learned a great deal regarding the legal aspect of their fight: "We helped them a lot with understanding the legal texts and development regulations" (*ibid.*). Despite its limited human and financial resources, FNE 65 acts as a unifying force for campaigning associations across the *département* and plays a significant role in terms of institutional learning and introducing campaigners to the political art of handling public affairs. The departmental association plays a supervisory role, and its involvement with bodies such as the Departmental Commission for Sites, Views and Landscapes, as well as its position within national networks, means it is well-positioned to raise the alarm when necessary. The FNE also has proven experience leading legal challenges, which often results in the cancellation of NTU planning approval. The FNE may also become involved in a valley in support of actions initiated by a local association. One such example comes from the Louron

Valley with ARPAL, an association affiliated with the FNE, which launched an independent procedure to contest modifications to the local planning policy (PLU) that would have allowed the creation of a new cable car. Deploying a form of resistance that is solid and well-organised and has legal expertise, local and departmental associations thus set out to obstruct certain development projects by challenging their legality rather than engaging in open conflict: This represents a significant departure from the ‘mass mobilisation’ methods favoured in the 1970s.

- 13 This capacity for resistance can often paralyse projects: “There are environmental protection associations that systematically attack every project, but that’s perfectly natural: There’s a clear procedure in place, and those dissenting voices are useful. But it has to be constructive... in some areas, nothing can move forward” (interview with CG65, 11/07/2013). The resort at Piau Engaly has seen all of its applications for planning permission systematically blocked by the association ‘Aragnouet – Piau Engaly – Avenir’, which was founded in 1994 to campaign for “respect for the environment and a harmonious approach to development for all construction or renovation projects”⁴. In 2012 the association succeeded in blocking the PLU granted to the resort, and in July 2013 it overturned the two planning authorisations issued for the construction of the Edeneo pool complex, which had already been built and thus found itself in legal limbo. However, this association, which specialised in opposing urban development projects, has made way for a new association known as the ADPSG, which is focused on contesting the latest proposals to expand the resort’s ski slopes.

The plan to expand Piau Engaly: ambiguous local reaction

- 14 Initiated by the regional government of Aragon (Spain), supported by the Hautes-Pyrénées Council and exclusively focusing on the French side of the Pyrenees, the proposed link road between the Aragnouet / Bielsa tunnel and the Piau Engaly ski resort inspired a remarkable wave of protests. Approved by the Aragnouet town council in December 2010, the developers submitted an application for NTU authorisation, which met with virulent local opposition. Ultimately, the project was abandoned.

A cross-border project initiated by the Aragon region but handled by the Aragnouet town council

- 15 The Aragon region initiated and financed this cross-border project in the hope of boosting the profitability of the tourist facilities of Sobrarbe, a mountain district without ski resorts on account of its poor snow coverage (Dianeige *et al.*, 2010). The regional authorities in Aragon thus came up with the idea of improving access to the Piau Engaly ski resort, already accessible via the cross-border road tunnel connecting Aragnouet and Bielsa. In order to “attract more Spanish visitors”, the proposals included a new car park at the exit of the tunnel, accompanied by two detachable chair lifts and a cable car system crossing two completely untouched valleys to reach the Piau Engaly resort “directly” (Figure 4). The project also included plans to create a new ski resort covering a total of 42 hectares, with 10 km of slopes in the two valleys. “Additional facilities” were also planned in order “to make the site fully functional”.

Various advantages were cited: “greater reputation and market share in Spain”, an “improved economic outlook for all tourist operators in the valley thanks to this higher profile” and “more clients for the ski resort, with skiers staying in the Sobrarbe Valley”¹⁵ (Dianeige *et al.*, 2010). For the municipal authorities, the project presented a superb opportunity to reach out to a new, international clientele (press release from the mayor of Aragnouet, 20/01/2011).

Figure 4. The Piau Engaly resort

PHOTO: V. VLÈS, JULY 2006

A disputed development project

- 16 Shortly after these proposals were published in January 2011, a diverse coalition of concerned parties (farmers, hunters, mountain guides, Friends of the Pyrenees National Park) founded the ADPSG with the aim of “protecting and preserving nature, the environment and the quality of life in the Saux and La Gélà valleys, but not exclusively” (Articles of Association, Art. 2). The group had the backing of Mountain Wilderness and was affiliated with FNE 65. The President of the association was a long-time militant who learned the ropes of environmental campaigning from the founders of SEPANSO, a group that rose to prominence in the 1970s during the struggle to protect the Néouvielle Massif against proposals to link existing ski resorts and create new roads. A local man with strong roots in the Aure Valley, he proudly assumed the role of “troop leader” for an “army of volunteers” comprising around 40 committed members who “just needed a bit of remote guidance” (President of the ADPSG).
- 17 The operating methodology of the ADPSG was fairly standard: media exposure and a strong presence both online and in the public sphere, with banners denouncing the project, as well as a petition (online and on paper). The group’s campaign operated on several levels: ecological, of course, to decry the impact on the local environment and landscape of this “unnatural” project that would endanger “all the fragile mountain

ecosystems” (<http://www.sauvons-la-gela.org/>) of the La Gla Valley (cf. Figure 5), but also with messages that were political, technical and economic in nature. The ADPSG criticised the lack of consultation regarding the project and alleged a “subversion of democracy”: Details of the project were released to the public relatively late, arousing the local residents’ surprise and suspicion. They “snuck them out, secretly. People didn’t take kindly to that. It’s their mountain!” (President of the ADPSG). The group also criticised the technical credentials of the project: “Three slopes for 100 million!⁶ That’s ridiculous, it’s not possible. And then when you look at where they wanted to put the cable car, on slopes that steep, you’d need pylons 40 m high, up and over the peak, with unstable ground, then a 250 m stretch over the valley. We’re talking about a valley with strong winds. Who in the local government is mad enough to sign up for that?” (President of the ADPSG). Nonetheless, the protest movement was not without ulterior motives. The ADPSG primarily comprised residents of the lower reaches of the valley who were keen to protect their own interests and thus not particularly hostile to the ski tourism sector, from which many of them derive their income (the President himself owns one of the campsites). Their fear was that the project would rob them of the Spanish clients who frequent Saint-Lary: “Why don’t the Spaniards just come here? Rather than us buying them a car park (30,000 m² to be paid by French taxpayers), which is going to cost a fortune. They’re going to mess up our mountain. It’s not theirs! (...) We were sticking up for our own: ‘We have the capacity and the resources to welcome them. Over there, there’s nothing’ (...). It has to stop!” (President of the ADPSG). This local conflict regarding the planned expansion of the Piau Engaly resort was not only a fight to preserve a relatively untouched valley on the outskirts of the Pyrenees National Park: It also served to demonstrate the ambiguous positions that can emerge – in the context of an unsteady market with an uncertain future – from a territorial system in which neighbouring valleys and resorts are in competition.

Figure 5. The La Gla Valley

PHOTO: V. VLS, SEPTEMBER 2015

Conclusion

- 18 Recent conflicts over the development of winter sports facilities in the Hautes-Pyrénées serve to illustrate the deep-rooted, local nature of opposition to such projects. Nonetheless, the legitimisation strategies and forms of expression adopted by this social protest movement cannot be dismissed as a simple not-in-my-backyard, or NIMBY, reaction (Trom, 1999). The experience of local mobilisation in defence of the Pyrenean landscape shows that, while there are indeed conflicts over the value to be placed on natural resources (Lahaye, 2007), other factors are also at play. The motivations that lead people to become involved in protest movements are various and complex, including a commitment to protect a mountainous environment to which they have been attached all their lives, with a strong emotional investment and a determination to preserve certain uses of this space, and a desire to protect local jobs. Close examination of the dynamics of this conflict – defined in the broadest sense of the word as “the whole process covering the beginning of the action through to its eventual resolution” (Mormont, 2006) – reveals the decisive role that media coverage and the ability to draw upon broader networks (social, digital) play in determining the success or failure of a movement. While today’s disputes reflect the new emphasis on legal action, they also appear more localised and specialised than the struggles of the 1970s: The mass movements of the past have been replaced by digital networking and legal know-how. Defined by their opposition to specific proposals, these movements show little potential to become a constructive source of new proposals and territorial innovation. The protesters’ inability to get behind an acceptable model for the ‘tourist transition’ seems connected to the resilience of an economic model that, in spite of the difficulties it faces, remains founded upon a productivist approach to development that continues to prop up the local economy and its stakeholders.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Atout France, 2013.– *Stations touristiques et espaces naturels*, Paris, Atout France / DATAR / Ministère de l’écologie, du développement durable et de l’énergie.
- Bourdeau Ph., 2009.– “De l’après-ski à l’après-tourisme, une figure de transition pour les Alpes ? Réflexions à partir du cas français”, *Revue de géographie alpine / Journal of Alpine Research*, n° 97-3, accessed 12 May 2014. URL: <http://rga.revues.org/1049>.
- Bourdeau Ph., 2008.– “Les défis environnementaux et culturels des stations de montagne”, *Téoros*, n° 27-2, pp. 23-30.
- Charvolin F., 2012.– “L’affaire de la Vanoise et son analyste. Le document, le bouquetin et le parc national”, *Vingtième siècle. Revue d’histoire*, n°1-113, pp. 82-93.
- Clarimont S., 1996.– Conflits pour l’eau dans le bassin de l’Èbre, *Revue Espace rural*, n° 36, pp. 63-114.

Clarimont S., 2006.- “Partager les eaux de l’Èbre. La presse régionale aragonaise contre les projets de transfert”, *Dossier des Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez - Nouvelle série, Le partage de l’eau (Espagne, Portugal, Maroc)*, Patrice Cressier, Fabienne Wateau [dir.] n° 36-2, pp.149-170.

Clarimont S., 2013.- “La patrimonialisation des espaces naturels en débat : la réforme du Parc national des Pyrénées (France)”, *VertigO - La revue électronique en sciences de l’environnement* [Online], Hors-série n°16 / juin 2013, accessed 25 June 2015. URL: <http://vertigo.revues.org/13549>.

Clarimont S., Vlès V., 2008.- *Tourisme durable en montagne: entre discours et pratiques*, Paris, Afnor.

Cour des comptes, 2015.- *L’avenir des stations de ski des Pyrénées : un redressement nécessaire, des choix inévitables*, Paris, Cour des Comptes.

D’Amico F., Bardonnet A. Delzon S., Michalet R., Vlès V., 2013.- “La montagne”, in Le Treut H. (ed.), *Les impacts du changement climatique en Aquitaine*, Collection “Dynamiques Environnementales-A la croisée des sciences”, Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux et LGPA-Editions, pp. 211-233.

Dianeige, Amidev, Contours, RTM, 2010.- *Demande d’autorisation d’Unité Touristique Nouvelle. Domaine skiable de liaison entre le tunnel routier d’Aragnoet/Bielsa et le domaine skiable de Piau Engaly*, 5 chapters, 353 p.

Donzelot J., Estèbe Ph. (eds), 1994.- *L’État animateur : essai sur la politique de la ville*, éditions Esprit.

Dredge D., 2010.- “Place change and tourism development conflict: Evaluating public interest”, *Tourism Management*, n° 31-1, pp. 104-112.

Fablet G., 2015.- *Entre performance de l’outil de production et pérennité de l’outil d’aménagement : le dilemme immobilier dans les stations nouvelles d’altitude*, Thèse de doctorat en urbanisme, mention aménagement, Université de Grenoble, UMR PACTE.

Fagence M., 1990.- “Geographically-referenced planning strategies to resolve potential conflict between environmental values and commercial interests in tourism development in environmentally sensitive areas”, *Journal of Environmental Management*, n° 31-1, pp. 1-18.

George-Marcelpoil E., 2002.- “Les systèmes d’acteurs des stations de montagne”, in *Quelles stations au 21^{ème} siècle ?* Courchevel, 9-10 December 2002, FACIM, Editions Compac’t.

Kalaora B., 2001.- “À la conquête de la pleine nature”, *Ethnologie française*, n° 31-4, pp. 591-597.

Kousis M., 2000.- “Tourism and the environment: a social movements perspective”, *Annals of Tourism Research*, n° 27- 2, pp. 468-489.

Lafaye C., Thévenot L., 1993.- “Une justification écologique ? Conflits dans l’aménagement de la nature”. *Revue française de sociologie*, pp. 495-524.

Lahaye N., 2007.- “La dimension conflictuelle de la valorisation touristique d’un espace naturel protégé : le cas du Mont Orford”, *Téoros*, n° 26-2, pp. 46-52.

Lascoumes P., 1994.- *L’éco-pouvoir - Environnements et politiques*, Paris, La Découverte.

Laslaz L., 2005.- *Les zones centrales des parcs nationaux alpins français (Vanoise, Ecrins, Mercantour) : des conflits au consensus social ? Contribution critique à l’analyse des processus territoriaux d’admission des espaces protégés et des rapports entre sociétés et politiques d’aménagement en milieux montagnards*. Ph.D. thesis in Geography, Chambéry, Université de Savoie, UMR EDYTEM.

Marcelpoil E., Langlois L., 2006.- “Protection de l’environnement et développement touristique en station : du conflit à l’organisation des proximités”, *Développement durable et territoires* [En

ligne], Dossier n° 7 - 2006, accessed 12 May 2014. URL : <http://developpementdurable.revues.org/2660>

Mormont M., 2006.- "Conflit et territorialisation", *Géographie, économie, société*, n° 8-3, pp. 299-318.

Newsome D., Moore S., Dowling R., 2002.- *Natural area tourism*, Collection Aspects of Tourism, Channel View Publications.

Selmi A. 2009.- "L'émergence de l'idée de parc national en France", in Larrère R., Lizet B., Berlan-Barqué M. [eds.] *Histoire des parcs nationaux. Comment prendre soin de la nature ?*, Éditions Quae, pp. 43-58.

Trom D., 1999.- "De la réfutation de l'effet Nimby considérée comme une pratique militante. Notes pour une approche pragmatique de l'activité revendicative", *Revue française de science politique*, n° 49-1, pp. 31-50.

Vlès V., 2010.- "Du moderne au pastiche : questionnement sur l'urbanisme des stations de ski et d'alpinisme", *Mondes du tourisme*, n° 1, pp. 39-48, accessed 25 juin 2015. URL: <http://www.revue-espaces.com/librairie/7743/urbanisme-architecture-stations-sports-hiver-stations-montagne.html>

Vlès V., 2014.- *Métastations. Mutations urbaines des stations de montagne. Un regard pyrénéen*, Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, Collection Le territoire et ses acteurs.

Vlès V., Clarimont S., Hatt E., Bénos R., Piriou J., Moulinié V., Bessière J., Torrente P., 2015.- *Impacts des mesures de préservation des grands sites naturels*, Ministère de l'Écologie, du Développement durable et de l'Énergie, ministère du Logement et de l'Égalité des Territoires, Plan urbanisme construction architecture, APR 2014 "Les sites exceptionnels : quelle contribution au développement local ?" 16 p. URL: <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01184808>

NOTES

1. Although the Pyrenees only account for 10% of France's skiing market, the region's ski resorts occupy an important place in the local economy. The Hautes-Pyrénées *département* receives 50 million euros in revenue from the ski lifts, equivalent to half the total turnover generated by the mountains (Atout France, 2013), and is home to three of the most popular ski resorts in the Pyrenees: Saint-Lary, Le Grand Tourmalet and Peyragudes. It is also home to a few more modest resorts (Hautacam, Cauterets, Gavarnie and Piau Engaly, the only privately developed resort in the Pyrenees, located in the district of Aragnouet).
2. Cases, stakeholder positions, interview forms and a full list of all interviews conducted are available, subject to copyright, at <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01249223>
3. Article L.145-9 of the Urban Planning Code
4. <http://www.piau-avenir.fr/>, accessed 26 June 2015).
5. With just 265,000 skier days in 2010, the Piau Engaly resort (which was among the most popular in the 1980s) came in 9th out of the 13 resorts in the western and central Pyrenees (including both south and north-facing slopes). The resort is facing serious difficulties.
6. The figure cited by the President of the association may appear to be exaggerated, as the total cost of the project is estimated to be €54 million.

ABSTRACTS

In the Pyrenees, the decentralised manner in which planning permission is awarded to projects might give the impression that the expansion of ski resorts is now more attuned to the concerns of local people, with potential conflicts handled more effectively than they were in the past. The reality is in fact quite different: The direct proximity of highly artificial spaces dedicated to winter sports with zones of exceptional environmental and natural importance continues to produce many conflicts; however, these receive relatively little media attention, but they have the potential to block development. Today's anti-development associations are using new tools and methods, and their ability to counter proposed projects is undeniable. Presenting a resistance that is "solid, well-organised and backed up by legal expertise", they use legal channels to campaign against projects they consider to be harmful, and they eschew mass demonstrations. This marks a clear break from previous approaches. Unlike the protest movements of the 1970s, these citizens' associations remain pragmatic, non-hierarchical and local, led by 'mountain folk'. Some local campaigns are ambiguous in nature and bring together a highly diverse array of stakeholders with interests in the local economy. Protest groups first and foremost, these associations rarely transcend their oppositional stance to propose real alternatives and become a force for territorial innovation.

INDEX

Keywords: conflict, tourism development, ski resort, regional innovation, Hautes-Pyrénées

AUTHORS

SYLVIE CLARIMONT

Lecturer and Research Director in Geography and Development. Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour. SET / UMR Laboratory 5603 CNRS / UPPA
sylvie.clarimont@univ-pau.fr

VINCENT VLÈS

Professor of Development and Urban Planning Studies. Université Toulouse-Jean Jaurès. CERTOP/UMR Laboratory 5044/CNRS/UT2J/UPS.
vincent.vles@univ-tlse2.fr