When inhabitants photograph their landscapes to prepare a local sustainable development project: *new perspectives for the organisation of local participatory discussion groups*

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Abstract

In rural areas, the taking into account of landscape in a development project is difficult. Some of them think that landscape appreciation is kept to specialists, others that landscape management concerns only famous places and the majority of inhabitants meet difficulties to express their opinion only by words. In order to get to their actual opinion and to help them to share their points of view about landscape preferences, we have experimented a survey method on landscape's representations through photographs taken by the inhabitants and elective people, using disposable cameras in different areas of French Massif central and south of France. Each actor took pictures of « their » landscape answering thematic questions. It seems that the landscape perception in old historical regions (Corbières, Comminges) presents more human elements (monuments and anthropised places) than in « rough » mountain areas where forest, water, grazing areas with a natural aspect are prevailing. Then, the photographic tool appears to be useful for understanding and defining the ordinary landscapes, in their emotional, identity, aesthetic, dynamic, heritage and project dimensions, contributing to thoughts on territorial identity. This work opens new perspectives for the organisation of local participatory discussion groups and gives indications about the way the landscape is constructed and integrated in the mind of people who are mainly forgot during the unfolding process of development projects.

Introduction

The European Landscape Convention, in its 5th article, indicates that each country has to "*establish procedures for the participation of general public, local and regional authorities and other parties with an interest in the definition and implementation of the landscape policies*".

In fact, in rural areas, the taking into account of the landscape in a development project is difficult. Some people think that landscape appreciation is kept to specialists, others that landscape management concerns only famous places and the majority of inhabitants meet difficulties to express their opinion only by words.

That is why we have experimented a survey method on landscape's representations through photographs taken by different categories of people, using disposable cameras in different areas of the French Massif central and in the south of France.

The aim of this paper is to present and to discuss the first results of this work that opens new perspectives for the

organisation of local participatory discussion groups. This work gives also indications about the way the landscape is constructed and integrated in the mind of people who are mainly forgotten during the unfolding process of development projects.

I - Methodological construction

1) Main theoretical basis

Florence convention defines the landscape as "*an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*"[1]. Since the beginning of the XXth century, this point of view is defended by geographers, in France (Sorre, 1913), in Germany (Troll, 1928) or in England or USA (Sauer, 1925). In 1939,

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[1] European landscape convention, 2000

Troll proposed two linkages: between landscape and economy and between landscape and ecology. He imagined the word " *Landschaft Öcologie = landscape ecology*" that has been reused and conceptualised by biogeographers, specially in central and east Europe (Beroutchavili, 1978) and by ecologists (Forman and Godron, 1986). Between geography and agronomy, an agronomist, J.P Deffontaines (1973, 1995), considers the landscape as a tool that help farmers to express what they do, where and why and at the same time that help people to understand how farming activity transforms landscape features. For thirty years, he developed very useful methods based on "*agro-physionomist landscape units*".

From this point of view, the landscape is a thing, a subject of study that can be described, characterised and linked to specific processes. Despite the difficulties of the exercise, these researchers think that the progresses in science could permit to reveal to people what the landscape is and how it works.

During the sixties and the seventies, human geographers, psycho-sociologists, anthropologists started to analyse the relation between the landscape and the quality of life, the "*sensorial quality*" (Lynch, 1960) and the local identity. They think that the landscape is a human construction that depends on collective cultural and social dimensions ("*landscape models*", Luginbuhl 1991, 1997) and personal experiences. The aesthetic dimension has been also a point of interest for philosophers. In France, Roger (1978, 1995) proposed the concept of "*artialisation*" to explain that the landscape is seen as an art production. As a consequence, the landscape is different from the environment and if nobody has an art perception, then there is no landscape, only an area.

This short survey of different theoretical aspects of the landscape definition could frighten local managers that have to apply landscape policies. Even so, in a pragmatic approach, these two ways of thinking can be gathered, specially if we leave the theoretical debate about THE landscape to joint the local preoccupations of inhabitants concerned by "the landscapes of their surrounding". In this direction, precursors such as Fines (1968) or Wallace (1970)[2] experimented assessment analysis of landscape preferences in England. If they used qualitative approaches at the beginning, nowadays, many researchers try to have a more quantitative one, based on indicators, notes or multicriteria analysis. But often, the landscape is not very well characterised and located and if the calculation is accurate, the subject of the evaluation remains very fuzzy or linked to the single vision of landscape specialists.

That is why we think that to get to the actual opinion of inhabitants and to help them to share their points of view about their landscape preferences, the first thing to do is to give them the opportunity to express what these landscapes mean and what they see in them. And for that, specific representation tools of the landscape have to be imagined.

2) Landscape representations in a participatory approach

In 1984, Brossard and Wieber proposed a general theory about the landscape system that is very relevant to link its materiality and the representations. It is organised in three sub-systems. First, the materiality of the landscape depends on the "*producing system*" characterised by biophysical and anthropogenic factors. Secondly, the "*user's system*" has three

subjects of interest : landscape study for a better knowledge, landscape use and feelings, landscape management. The linkage is done by a third sub system, the "*visible landscape*", made up of two types of items: biophysical and/or anthropogenic "*landscapes things*" and "*pictures of landscapes elements*". If these things exist by themselves, their perception as pictures of landscape elements is a social construction that depends on people and has to be explained.

Three main ways could be possible to express an opinion about the landscape:

- **a verbal one** : face to face, during focus groups or public meetings or with enquiries. Despite the number of researchers that use it, we consider that using only speeches is problematic. Several categories of people are afraid of expressing their opinion, as farmers or rural populations that often say "*what I say can't interest you, I am not intelligent enough*" during verbal enquiries. But, the main problem is that even if someone can express his opinion, it's very difficult to know exactly what he is speaking about. During our enquiries presented below, different people of the same area declared that forest has expanded a lot during the last decades while others considered that nothing had changed during the same period. In fact, both were true but they were speaking about different locations in the same surrounding (Michelin, 1998).

- **an "inside investigation"**: to solve this problem, some researchers propose to make their inquires inside the landscape (Guissipelli and Fleury, 2003). Then people can directly express their opinion and specify what they are speaking about. The results are very attractive but one problem remains. It takes time and it's only possible to do it during the day and if the weather is fine. Some people are only free in the evening and in Middle Mountains where the weather is often cold and cloudy, it's not possible.

- **The pictorial approach**: can take many figures : Some representations are descriptive (photography, drawing, painting), some propose an analysis (sketches, cross-section), some are more interpreted as 3D diagrams (Michelin, 2000), landscape maps, virtual landscapes (Joliveau and Belvèze, 2002) or hyper landscapes[3]. The main problem of these representations doesn't come from how the landscapes are represented but from who submit them to discussion. If they have been done by specialists, it's very difficult for inhabitants to call them into question and to propose other options, especially if they have a nie look. Luginbuhl (1989) in the Boichaud region met this kind of difficulties. But if one asks inhabitants to draw a landscape or to map it, it's worse because a lot of people don't know how to do it and are afraid of taking a pencil or a brush. To avoid this problem, we decided to use photographs done by inhabitants and elected people. For Bourdieu (1965), if there is a "*common aesthetic*" in the photos taken by people, it is determined by social functions and framed by norms and forbids. At this time, certainly these limi-

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[2] refereed by Pinchemel P., 1992 *la face de la terre, éléments de géographie*, Paris, Armand Colin

[3] see Ericx M., Partoune C., Pirenne M., 2002 : « Les hyperpaysages panoramiques : une utilisation pédagogique originale des outils multimédias et de l'internet », univ. Liège, 36 p (www.ul.ac.be/hotes/iep)

tations due to the social pressure and the difficulty of the technique would have limited the interest of using photos to access the actual opinion of inhabitants about their landscapes, except if they were photo amateurs. But nowadays, everybody can take photos, especially with a disposable camera, cheap, easy to use and available almost everywhere, even in a small grocery. So we have considered that the social norms were not yet strong enough to forbid people to take certain representative pictures of their landscape opinion, even if these views were not refereed to a dominant aesthetic value.

3) How to use disposable cameras in a mediation process?

Photographs have been used by social workers in different situations of conflicts. Freire (1974) used it to help poor people living in shantytowns to describe social conflicts and to imagine solutions to solve them. After a period of teaching the basis of the photography techniques, even the poorest and the least educated could express what they have suffered and then the others have shared and discussed their point of view. Nowadays, the same method is still in use by humanitarian workers with disposable cameras (Coutausse, 2004[4]).

In easier conditions, French administration has been interested in using photographs to analyse the landscape changes and the opinion of inhabitants about them. In 1989, the national "*planning administration*" (DATAR) asked famous photographers to present their vision of the French current landscapes. The result shocked a lot of people because their pictures described industrial abandoned places, urban dehumanised new buildings, waste and dumps and very few traditional rural quiet landscapes. All these representations were very far from esthetical norms of the XIXth landscape painting. Many administrators were so astonished at discovering a new aspect of their country that the "*environment ministry*" decided in 1992 to propose a great show "*the liked landscapes of French people*" and asked citizens to send one photograph with a small text. They received more than 9000 documents (Clergue and Dubost, 1995) and this success convinced us that our hypothesis was really good.

But as a landscape photograph is a representation, if the photographer is completely free, it's very difficult to know which meanings are hidden behind the represented scenery, even if there is a text linked to the picture. So we looked at two points very attentively:

a) How to ask the good questions…?
For Sautter (1992), when people speak about the landscape, they don't use every time the same paradigm. This geographer identified four types that he named "*landscape style*" ("*paysagismes*" in French):
- the "*ordinary landscape*" is the picture of the everyday environment. It is so familiar that people often forget it or don't see it anymore, until a great change occurs (Lelli and Paradis, 2000);
- the "*utilitarian landscape*" is the picture of the areas where people carry out specific activities as cattle breeding (Michelin and Joliveau, 2002);
- the "*hedonist landscape*" is linked to pleasant personal

experiences and to aesthetic representations, as in contemplation ;
- the "*symbolic landscape*" is the result of cultural, historic or social representations. It permits to access the landscape models (Luginbuhl, 1991).

So we imagined an inquiry with questions in relation to these "*landscape styles*" to guide the photographer. Moreover, to be sure that he will be in a good state of mind during the photographic process, we try to formulate each question as a dramatic situation. For instance, to present the landscape model of the typical landscapes of his roots, the question was: "*if your cousin asks you to send him photos to help him to better know the native land of his family which picture would you take?*"

b) …to the good people!
The second point was to make sure that the chosen photographers can expose an honest opinion that represents more than their personal point of view. We paid attention to three points:
- **a social representativeness:** The objective was not to have a statistical representation but to aim the widest field of opinions even if they have been shared by few people. We tried to have either people who were "*landscape producers*" (farmers, foresters, electric power company…) or "*landscape users*" (native and new inhabitants, retired, environmental trust members, local painters, fishers, hunters, tourist guides…). In a third group, we put "*landscape referees*" (elected people, social workers, association members, development agents…) who can defend the public interest ;
- **an implication in the local public life:** It was important that these people were known by the inhabitants to be sure that the majority of inhabitants could consider their answers as acceptable, even if they don't have the same opinion. However, we tried to have some non-elected people, who have a good knowledge of their country and who could express opinions that are often missing during the decision making process ;
- **A good motivation to participate:** As the process needed an important implication, we looked for people who were motivated enough to accept to spend enough time.

II - Description of the work

1) The context

The places where we led on our investigations had common features:
- the landscape was not a clear stake and did not represent a great economic value ;
- these countryside were far from developed areas, with a decrease of agricultural pressure ;
- there was a lack of actions or projects related to the landscape, despite the collective projects or a co-operation between communes ;
- the elected people were interested in this experimentation because they didn't find anything to make inhabitants partners in a local development process or the development advisers where looking for a second wind to boost the current projects.

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[4] Chatel, L. (2004). «trafic d'enfance en technicolor.» <u>témoignage chrétien</u> (3135): 23
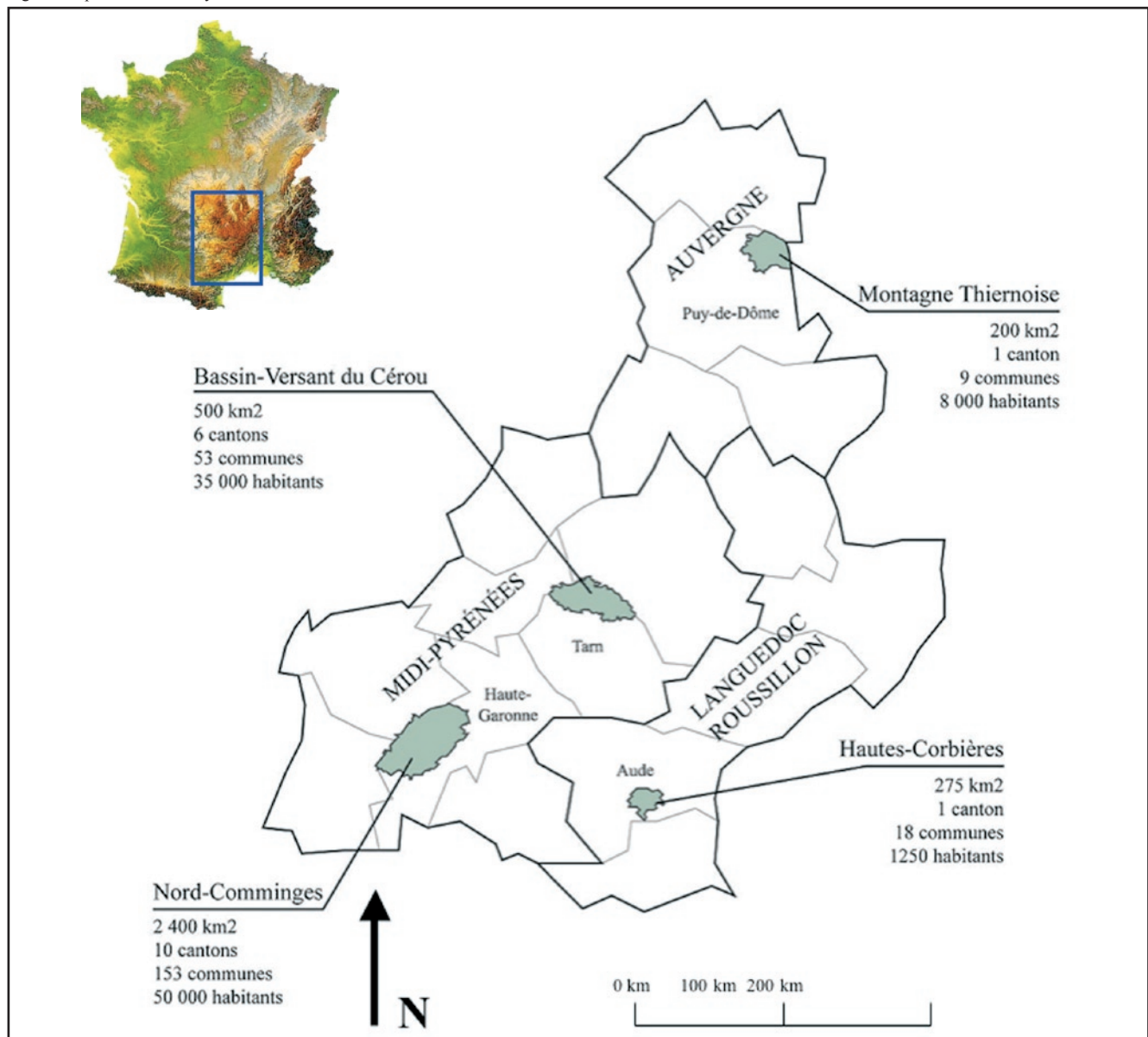
2) The four case studies (cf map fig.1)

Despite local differences, these four places belong to peripheral areas considered either by planning managers or local populations as margins. Geographical conditions are rough.

The altitude is not too high but the steep slopes, the poor soils and the severe climate limit the possibilities of development. Population had decreased for a long time. However now, new inhabitants start to repopulate them. The main features are gathered in the table 1 below:

Table 1: mains geographical features of the case studies

Name of the region	Nord Comminges	Hautes Corbières	Cérou	Montagne thiernoise
Geographic location	South-west of Toulouse, Haute-Garonne (31)	South-west of the Corbières, Aude (11)	South of the Massif central, Tarn (81)	North-east of the Massif central, Puy de Dôme (63)
Municipalities	153	18	53	9
Area (ha)	2400 km2	275 km2	500 km2	200 km2
Population	50 000 hab	1250 hab	35 000 hab	8000 hab
Altitude mini/maxi (m)	150m/496m	200m /900m	190m/520m	320m/1285m
First main city & distance (km)	Toulouse (50 km)	Perpignan/ Carcassonne (75 km	Albi (15km)	Clermont-Ferrand (55 km)
Landscape policies	*"Pays"* Project	Local *"intercommunal"* development Project	Landscape convention = *"charte paysagère"*	Architecture and Landscape convention

Fig. 1 - Map of the case study locations

Bassin-Versant du Cérou
500 km2
6 cantons
53 communes
35 000 habitants

Montagne Thiernoise
200 km2
1 canton
9 communes
8 000 habitants

Hautes-Corbières
275 km2
1 canton
18 communes
1250 habitants

Nord-Comminges
2 400 km2
10 cantons
153 communes
50 000 habitants

0 km   100 km   200 km

N

3) The stakeholders – photographers

As our methodology requires a long time, it was not possible to have more than twenty people in each case study. The main characteristics of the local groups are gathered in the table 2 below.

After the shot, the photographers gave back the cameras with the texts to the local informer who had in charge to organise the processing and to transmit all the documents to the researcher.

b)   step 2 : basic analysis of the pictures

Table 2 : main features of the photographer's panel in each case study

Name of the region	Nord Comminges	Hautes Corbières	Cérou	Montagne thiernoise
Period of the enquiries	April 1999	October 2000 to April 2001	July 2000 to May 2001	May 2000 to June 2001
Number of photographers	18	15	14	8
Sex ratio	16 men / 2 women	11 men / 4 women	9 men / 5 women	7 men / 1 women
Composition of the panel	Elected people, foresters, farmers, trust member, tourism worker, painter, business man, retreated	Elected people, foresters, farmers, architect adviser, planning advisers, development agents, association members, retreated and young	Elected people, farmers, architect adviser, forest adviser, farming adviser, teacher, retreated, …	Elected people, foresters, farmers, tourism worker, teacher, knife handler
Number of pictures	369	216	171	104
meetings	2	1	1	2

4) Unfolding of the work

Our methodology is made of four steps:

a)   step 1: preparation
In each place, we worked with a local informer who helped us to choose people who will participate. This person was an adviser or a technician of the local administration. The president of the local council has ratified the list of "photographers". In the four cases, we proposed the same five questions presented in the table 3 below (and one more in "*Hautes-Corbières*" that is not presented in this paper).

Each photo has been linked to each comment in a specific file. In a qualitative analysis, we noticed for each question the items present in the texts and in the pictures and their frequency.

c)   step 3 : face to face interviews
A face to face interview has been led on with each photographer. During the discussion, the photos have been used to help people to precise their point of view and to give more details and explanations. All the discussions have been recorded. In the Hautes corbières, we also asked people to

Table 3: the five questions and the diversity of answers in the five case-studies

Questions	Landscape "*style»*	Nord Comminges	Hautes Corbières *	Cérou*	Montagne* Thiernoise
1: "Tomorrow, you have to leave your house without any hope to come back. Which photos will you take to keep a view of the place where you lived?"	"Ordinary landscape"	78	43	38	20
2: "One cousin, fond of genealogy, phones to you. He explains that you belong to the same family. He asks you to send him photos that illustrate the landscapes of his roots."	"*Symbolic landscape"* (roots)	82	41	34	20
3: "In the country where you live, and related to your own experience and opinion, take photos of the places where you think that great changes will occur in a short term."	"Utilitarian landscape"	55	39	28	20
4: " In the commune or the country where you live, which places do you consider as horrific, and should be restored or eliminated?"	"hedonist landscape"	71	46	36	19
5: Which photos will you give to illustrate a tourist booklet to make them want to visit your country?"	"*Symbolic landscape"* (heritage)	83	47	35	25

(* Number of photos)

draw a map of what they considered as their "pays" during the interviews.

d)   step 4 : focus group meeting

All the photographers and the local informer have been invited to a meeting where we presented the results of our analysis. They have been discussed and compared. In the Hautes Corbières, Cérou and Montagne thiernoise, we asked them to choose from the collective production, which photos illustrate the best the different questions. The result of this selection has been presented only in the Hautes Corbières in an exhibition opened to all the inhabitants.

III - Main results

As the aim of this paper is methodological, we present here only the main results that can light new possibilities of mediation with the landscape. (For more detailed presentations see Michelin, 1998; Lelli, 2000, 2003; Paradis, 2004).

1) A method that reveals common landscape's models

a)   The "*ordinary landscape*": my home, my village, my childhood

The enquiries have revealed landscapes with a strong emotional power, personal and private (*"an old oak at the bottom of a meadow", "a wind mill"*) or locally shared ("*the place of the village*"). These places were not famous or exceptional. However, the photographs transformed them from ordinary landscapes to attractive ones *(cf Photograph #1)*.

b)   "We belong to the country that we see"

In the four cases, all the persons who took part in the experimentation draw up a linkage between their territory and the landscapes they decided to present. The photos helped them to better define the main characteristics of them. As an example, in the "*Nord-Comminges*", different people express a great attachment to the Pyrenean Mountains, though distant from more than fifty kilometers but very visible in many panoramas. *(cf. Photograph #2)*. Others spoke about *«specific landforms that belong to the territory* » as the montagne du Tauch in the Hautes Corbières *(cf. Photograph #3)*.

c)   The landscape of the roots is different from the landscape for the visitors

When they had to illustrate their roots, the persons have been very creative. Some looked for specific elements in the landscape as *«vineyards and holm oak»* in the Hautes Corbières *(cf. Photograph #4)*. Others put their parents or asked for somebody to take the picture with them inside the landscape. We can explain this attitude as a re-foundation of their own identity. This attitude proved that the attachment to their roots was strongly linked to the elements visible inside the landscape that they decided to shoot *(cf Photograph #5 & #6)*.

However, when they chose photos to illustrate an attractive booklet for visitors, their pictures were not so personal, as a medieval castle *(cf Photograph #7)*. The photographs were less creative, less diversified and more conventional. We make the hypothesis that the locals proposed to the visitors the landscape models that they imagined these people were waiting for. And mass media and dominant models have hardly influenced their opinion. Another explanation could

be that people were not ready to reveal to everybody a part of their private surrounding.

Our aim was not to evaluate the best answers but only to think over the results of different points of view. During the focus groups, the discussion ran easily only by presenting the two kinds of answers without any comment.

d)   A glance turned to the past

The photos presenting the main changes that occurred in the landscape have often been linked to a decrease of the rural activity or of small industries disappearance. Sometimes, persons have considered the landscape shooting as a possibility to give a dramatic dimension of these changes. In the "*Cerou*" valley, someone proposed a photograph of their parents, retired farmers, with a landscape background to explain that fallow lands cover more and more areas because of the decrease of the number of farmers *(cf Photograph #8)*.

Occasionally, some people used landscape photography as a tool to illustrate some preoccupations that was not visible but influential for the landscape management. For instance, a wife's mayor in the "*Nord Comminges*" has presented her grandfather reading the local patrimony paper, well installed under a climbing vineyard near her native farm. Her message was that it was necessary to be more careful about the local heritage *(cf. photograph #9)*.

In fact, our enquiries have revealed a dominant backward-looking vision of landscapes change. Many pictures testified of the disappearance of landscape structures after a plot's reorganisation (*cf. photographs #10)* or after a housing estate (*cf. photographs #11)*. These changes have been badly evaluated during the speeches.

e)   In many landscape's views, the same elements have been refused

One question was about the "horrific" or "unacceptable" landscapes. In the four cases, we obtained the same answers. "Black points" as dumps, trashes, car skeletons or ruins spread everywhere (cf. photographs #12). However, we didn't share the opinion of the locals about the choice of these "horrific" elements or their effective impact in the landscapes. Of course some problems existed, as new buildings that were badly integrated (cf. photographs #13) and some places were not very clean… But we didn't intervene and let them expose their opinion without any word.

In these rural areas, new plantations of spruces or pines have often been considered as a plague. For inhabitants, when the plantations were too close to the villages, the shadow, the wetness and the cold represented a decrease of their quality of life, especially in winter.

All this goes to show that two strong trends ensued from the mediation process:

- On one hand, photographs help stackeholder to formulate a local idea of their landscapes. This medium has protected them against a standardisation of the landscape's models that often exist in the speeches. Then, people understood better the relationship between their local society and their territory and discovered how the landscape could lever up their local development project (Debarbieux, 2004).
- On the other hand, this approach led on a precise and detailed characterisation of landscape's features, considered as a part of the local heritage, even if they were new. That is why in the territories where people were looking for their identity, the discussions around landscape's photos

**Question # 1 :
My landscapes**

Photograph #1 " the oak of my childhood's games", (Montagne Thiernoise)

**Question # 1 :
My landscapes**

Photograph #2: Pyrenean Mountains panorama from the Aurignac castle (Nord-Comminges)

**Question # 1 :
My landscapes**

Photograph #3: Tauch Mountain " (Hautes Corbières)

Question # 2: the landscape of the roots

Photograph #4: "vineyards and holm oak" (hautes Corbières).

Question # 2: the landscape of the roots

Photograph #5: Mr X, Retz de Sol, (Montagne Thiernoise).

Question #5 : landscapes for the visitors

Photograph #6:"A cutter and his son in their workshop" (Montagne Thiernoise)

Question #5 : landscapes for the visitors

Photograph #7:"the medieval castle at Villerouge" (Hautes Corbières)

Question # 2: the landscape of the roots

Photograph 8: a countryside rooted in its "rurality", (Cerou Valley)

Question # 1 : My landscapes

Photograph #9 : an 81 years old farmer reading the local heritage magazine

Question #3 : landscape changes

Photograph #10 : "a lunar landscape"(Cerou valley)

Question #4 : horrific landscapes

Photograph #11 : "ordinary house at the foot of the Villerouge castle"(Hautes Corbières)

Question #4 : horrific landscapes

Photograph #12 : "A dump"(Montagne thiernoise)

Question #4 : horrific landscapes

Photograph #13 : "A iron sheet building" (Cerou valley)

have permitted to overcome the dominant opinion that the past landscapes was better than the current re. A new relationship between the landscape and the local territory has dawned on them.

3) This method reveals multiple points of view

a) Landscape's models are different from one region to another

In the "*Montagne thiernoise*" and in the Hautes Corbières, the traditional rural landscape with its flocks or herds, traditional farms and hills landforms is an important part of the roots *(cf. photographs #14)*. However, stakeholders took photographs to speak about the knife industry that was disappearing *(cf. photographs #6)*. Before this project, nobody has spoken about this change while this industry employed small farmers who managed the landscape and kept it open. Then stakeholders understood better the linkage between the closing of the landscape and the closing of the knife's workshops.

In the "*Hautes-Corbières*", the stakeholders proposed natural and wild landscapes protected in a natural sanctuary and given to urban populations, "*space consumers*" *(cf. photographs #15)*. But at a same time, some of them were seeing these wild landscapes through a gardening model. As a reference of an heritage of the garden art, this gardening knowledge appeared during the discussion about some landscape elements ; for instance the box trees that have been carved in specific shapes inside a "*pure wild nature*" along the roads of this lost country *(cf. photographs #16)*.

We have identified another difference: the taking into account of the buildings in the pictures. In the "*Nord Comminges*" or in the "*Cérou*" valley, they took a lot of photos with buildings and anthropised landscapes. Buildings have been considered as an essential part of the typical landscape. On the other hand, buildings are less represented in the "*montagne thiernoise*" despite of the industrial history or in the "Hautes Corbières" while people spoke about building's local heritage value. It seems that landscape perceptions in some old historical regions as the North Comminges presents more human elements (monuments and anthropised places) than in « rough » mountain areas where forest, water, grazing areas with a natural aspect are prevailing.

At this state, it is difficult to conclude and a work remains to analyse the evolution of the value linked to the landscape for the different social groups that take part in the local development process.

b) Some disagreements inside a focus group

The landscape of the roots has not always been described with the same value. In the "montagne thiernoise", one new inhabitant presented a cutter workshop as a symbol of an industrial heritage that has to be preserved while old locals refused this picture, that they considered as the symbol of the poverty and the hardness of this life. With the picture in front of them, the debate was hard but not theoretical at all.

c) The same distance between the opinion of two social groups in several places

We didn't analyse precisely the opinions from one place to another but we noticed some similarities:

- a difference exists between the opinions of the natives and the new inhabitants as about the evolution of the farming activity visible in the landscape. New people think they live in the countryside where no great change has occurred while locals have better noticed that the typical landscape organisation could have changed due to a change in the farming system (*cf. photograph #17*)

- the same anxiety appears about the agriculture's future and the closing of the middle mountains landscapes as a consequence (*cf. photograph #14*). So, some stakeholders considered that it was necessary to produce a valorised picture of the opened and lively landscapes (*cf. photograph #18*)

IV - Discussion to better the action on the field

1) Methodological lessons

a) Some good results
- *A highly-rated method*

In the four situations, people took the same interest in their participation. They were enthusiastic and did their "*job*" in a very short time. Before starting the discussion, the disposable camera and the questions astonished them and put them in an active attitude. In some cases, all the family has participated. The camera went from a hand to another and the answers became more diversified after a debate that started at home. Very few people didn't give back the camera and only for serious reasons. This fact is certainly due to their roots attachment or to their social or professional activity ; that is why the choice of motivated persons is so important.

During the focus groups or the meetings, the discussions were rich, in a good state of mind and lasted a long time (2 or 3 hours). The persons were very pleased to be allowed to express their own opinion and proud that somebody spent time with them not telling them what to think but only listening to their opinion.

First, the persons have considered these pictures of landscapes as a medium that gave them the possibility of taking enough distance for speaking about themselves and about their activities.

On another hand, they have discovered that by the way of their own pictures, it was easier to access the others' opinions and feelings. Our method plaid as a mirror reflecting the different points of view and giving to each opinion the same frame and the same value.

- *Efficiency*

More than the good level of participation, the use of photos gave a key to access new ideas and opinions that have never been expressed before. For instance in the "*montagne thiernoise*", one person took a picture where nothing was visible, only shrubs and bushes along a small river. In fact, it was to indicate that the water mill was ruined and that the landscape abandonment was the result of this industrial crisis. After five years of work with the inhabitants to try to fight the closing of the landscape, the local administration's adviser and the mayor had never heard about this linkage before. They began to understand that working about landscape management could be possible only if the landscape project was related to economy.

- *Landscape photograph : a tool with numerous possibilities*

Although the photographs are considered as subjective,

Question #3 : landscape changes
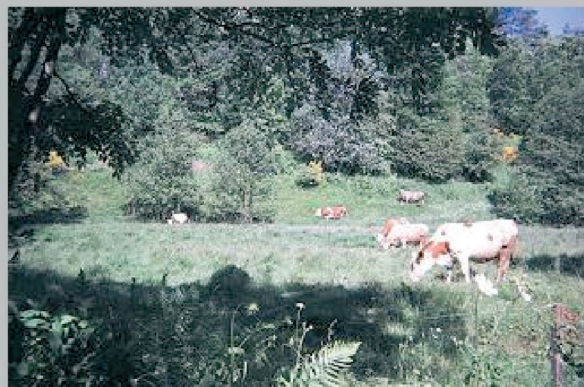
Photograph #14: "cows the feet in the water, for how long?", (Montagne thiernoise)

Question # 2: the landscape of the roots

Photograph #15: "nature in a pure state" (Hautes Corbières)

Question #3 : landscape changes

Photograph #16: "scarced box trees on the RD40 road, Termenes," (Hautes Corbières)

Question #5 : landscapes for the visitors

Photograph #17: "one's last farming breast, uprooted vineyards at Vignevieille ", (Hautes Corbières)

Question # 2: the landscape of the roots

Photograph #18: "At Crespin, the happiness is in the meadow", (Cérou valley)

Question # 1 : My landscapes

Photograph #19: "Cera path, brooms in flowers" (Montagne thiernoise)

they produced a precise discussion because the pictures took the place of some fuzzy words as landscape, fallow land, countryside, forest, hedge … that have not the same meaning for different people. By using a camera, the photographer offered the possibility to each member of the focus group to see the surroundings with his own eyes. As these photographs have been produced to answer questions, there were not only an "*iconic*" representation of the landscape as Pierce thought but also an "*index*" one, with a specific language that started to be learned and shared during the discussions. We are very close to the opinion of Van Lier (1983).

By this way, the members of the focus group have rebuilt the materiality through their glance. What was the most important for us was not the picture of the reality but the distance between all these representations, that drive all the group toward an " *intersubjective building of the reality*" (Walter, 2004).

From a philosophical point of view, the couple "photograph + comment" is really a mediation tool, (Petit Robert French dictionary, 1996) because it starts a collective construction based on a shared description of a starting state. After this first step, the photographs are used to define and to characterise a wished state of the landscape then to imagine how to join it by policies.

In the "montagne thiernoise", as an example, there was a great debate about the danger of the reforestation. Many people thought that this phenomenon will frighten tourists and visitors. But when these pictures have been presented to visitors, the result was not the same. Some outliving people have considered that these plantations were very peaceful and attractive. (Michelin and Joliveau, 2002). After this discovery, elected people understood that it might be useful to propose a specific policy to forbid new plantations but not because of a tourism damaging. The actual motivation was to protect the quality of their life and this preoccupation was justified and better accepted by foresters than the assumed risk against the local tourism economy.

In the" *Hautes Corbières*", this process helped stakeholders to define which pictures were missing for a complete representation of the landscape's diversity.

b)   Some problems are not solved

Our aim was to conclude the work by some propositions of actions and we thought that the landscape was able to help people to go faster and further *(Michelin, 2001)*. During the discussions, the stakeholders awaked to the utility of the landscape mediation. Thus, in the "*Cerou*" valley, they decided to modify the objectives of their local landscape convention. However, very few concrete propositions appeared at the end of the meetings.

The first danger was to consider this kind of work as a "local placebo" to occupy people while the important decisions were being taken. We noticed this drift in the *"Nord Comminges"* in 2000 (*Lelli, 2005*).

A second problem came from the period when the mediation process started. In the "*montagne thernoise*", we arrived too late after a long work led on by the regional park and we didn't succeed in energising elected people to include the conclusion of their analysis in a new program. (Michelin and Joliveau, 2005).

It is the same in the "*Hautes Corbières*", where this experiment arrived after a long endogenous development process. The local development advisers thought that they spent enough energy to mobilise inhabitants so they did not consider our work as a priority even if the aims were different.

A further complication came from the difficulty to go from the qualitative approach of the photographs toward a quantitative one. It's one thing to expose landscape preferences, it's another to establish a policy that makes it actual. When one has to propose zones, level of subsidies, targets… pictures are not relevant because they propose a vision that is linked to the place where they were shot.

c) Three questions without current answer

Even with these limits, we can now say that our method makes the discussions easier and opens new perspectives for developing participatory approaches. However, our work has lightened three new questionings.

-    *the "landscape interference"*

We have never been sure that the opinions that arose during the debates were really local ones. A risk of "*landscape interference*" still remains if the process manager doesn't pay attention to his capability of belief, especially in the societies which consider that they have only everyday landscapes. And a hard difficulty remains in our society which considers the landscape as a good for consumers whose representations are still in change ("*disposable landscapes*?"). One possibility to verify if the interpretations are shared by inhabitants is to propose an exhibition of the photographs and their comments in several busy places (supermarket, market place, city hall…) or during a mean event as done in the "*Hautes Corbières*" (Paradis, 2004). During this exhibition, one can ask visitors to vote for the pictures that illustrate the best the different questions. If they don't find any well adapted photograph to their opinion, they can propose places where they think the view will be better or they can bring personal documents too. We applied this idea in another place with a good result (Michelin and Joliveau, 2005).

-    *the "landscape soft consensus"*

As exposed below, the focus groups members were very pleased to overcome some blocks due to some misunderstanding. Thus, in the "*montagne thiernoise*", foresters and farmers discovered that they had common interests. The photographs helped them to go from a general and ideological speech ("*the right versus the wrong, the good versus the evil*") to a concrete and pragmatic analysis ("*where and why what I do disturb the others while I did it as well as possible*?") and they accepted to discuss about a forestal planning. In fact, we didn't meet conflicting situations with hard oppositions between two totally opposed landscape models, for example one creative and original project and a majority wish of the current landscapes protection.

-    *the "nebulous concept of local democracy"*

All along the discussion process, the photographic tool appeared to be useful for understanding and defining the ordinary landscapes, in their emotional, identity, aesthetic, dynamic, heritage and project dimensions, contributing to thoughts on territorial identity. At the beginning, we believed that this explanation could contribute to improve the local participation in the decision making process. In fact, it's not enough. One major difficulty is to manage the different levels of interest and power. What is good for locals can be a problem outside their territory. For instance, in an attractive

area, local elected people could be interested in selling the maximum of plots for new buildings because of the market demand pressure, even if this urbanisation destroys the quality and the heritage value of this landscape. Our method contributes to reveal different landscape models without any evaluation or classification. Then, the problem is to define which preferences are the best and how to integrate them in the local planning.

We think about four risks:

One is to be unable to evaluate the good and the bad consequences of each point of view and then to do nothing after the mediation process. In this case, democracy is sleeping. That is why we think that it's important to combine biophysical analysis of the materiality of the landscapes with the different landscape representations that can exist in the same place.

The second is to obtain only a soft consensus during the landscape discussion but unusable when the concrete decisions about planning management or economic development orientations have to be taken. Participatory process is then only a farce.

The third is to choose the majority opinion even if it is the least creative or even if this opinion is in contradiction with a more general interest. The form of the democracy is kept but remains the problem of power's levels management. And what about the results in terms of landscape quality!

The last way is to decide in contradiction with the majority opinion. The results are preferred but democracy is off and what about the consequences if the dictator is wrong?

These problems are general in a participatory process. They are not directly linked to a default of our method but on another hand, our method doesn't give a solution that has still to be imagined.

2) Theoretical lessons

a) The four "*paysagismes*" of Sautter are relevant but not sufficient

As photographic answers of the different questions presented different types of landscapes in a same area, we can consider that the "*landscape styles*" theory of Sautter is relevant. But for each question, the comments often mixed several levels (aesthetic, cultural, social…). We met what Corbin defined as an "*interlacing*" landscape representation (Corbin, 2001). That's why we consider that we have to identify more than four levels. After this clarification, we will be able to improve the writing of the questions.

b) A clearing of the different landscape status used in a local development project

During the discussions, people didn't consider the landscape with a unique status. By the way of photographs, it was easier to understand which meanings were underlying behind the pictures.

When people spoke about "black points", the landscape was a subject of interest, a thing whose aspect could be bettered. However, this status has not been so usual.

Often the landscape was not really the main subject of interest, only a pretext, a medium that allowed persons who had different interests to speak to each other. For instance, in the "*montagne thiernoise*", farming plots are small and distributes in various places. The regional park a few years ago started

a land reorganisation process with many difficulties. In the same place, during the focus group, the discussion was more quiet and constructive because the problem was visible in the landscape. The stakeholders discovered that the reorganisation was a good tool to reopen the landscape. So, this policy was not only useful for farmers but for everybody.

On the other hand, the landscape could be only an alibi that hides the actual objectives of the managers and gives them a good image of democrats while they drive the opinion in the direction they want to reach. For example in the "*Hautes Corbières*", the results of the actions of local development where often illustrated so as to justify the dynamic of the project.

Mainly, the landscape has been thought as a picture of a territory and considered as a part of the local heritage and identity. This symbolic dimension has been very important during the development project's construction because it helped people to see what a political decision meant both in a rational approach and in a sensitive one. The increase by 50 % of the forest rate has not the same impact as the vision of a picture where the whole area is forested, as far as close to the church and the cemetery. In another direction, the discussions around the photographs gave explanations about specific elements that were important for inhabitants while they were a problem for elected people or advisers. The example of the fallow lands is particularly demonstrative. For fifteen years at least, the planning managers considered that in the Massif central the expansion of broom was a problem because it was contributing to close the landscape. However, in the "*Cerou*" valley and in the "*Montagne thiernoise*", some persons shot slopes covered with brooms in flowers to express their attachment at these beautiful yellow coloured slopes ("*that's our mimosas as in the côte d'Azur, please, let us some areas in this state because we need them*", *cf. photography #19)*.

These experiences demonstrate that before acting, the first thing to do is to analyse why people want or refuse one landscape. If it is a symbolic meaning that explains the opinion, one has to work on the representations before on the materiality. In a second step and according to the landscape status involved, the proposed solutions should be adapted : direct action upon landscape objects, roundabout way concerning what is behind the pictures if the landscape is only a medium which has gathered people around a local project.

c) Landscape models and action models

In this direction, we noticed that there was a strong linkage between the landscape models involved during the discussions and the action models proposed to better the landscape quality. This same result has been shown by Candau (2004) in other places of the Massif central.

At the beginning, the landscape was often considered as a scenery and people asked for direct protection or restoration : cleaning the black points, tree plantations to hide new farm buildings… During the focus groups, in front the photographs, the persons started to consider the landscape as a part of their territory. This point of view is in accordance to the three part model proposed by Bertrand (2000) : the "*geosystem*" with anthropogenic and biophysical processes, the territory more and more artificial, the landscape and its art dimension. When landscape becomes a medium for policies reflection, the demand changes. People accept a more dynamical appearance of the landscape and the policies don't consider the same targets. Some aim at the processes that produce the non

wished landscape by reducing the negative externalities or increasing the positives (as agri-environment policies). Others try to change the representations by the education or the information in order to transform a refused landscape model in an acceptable one.

Conclusion

These different propositions translate the increase of landscape models diversity that follows from our work. It would appear that photographs considered as a simile language for speaking about the landscape helped people to reach a better understanding of their surroundings and allowed them to be more active in the preparation of their future.

However, it must be acknowledged that the way is very narrow between a direct translation of the prevailing local demand without any reflection and creativity and a forced glance, produced by the researcher's work.

So, to obtain a good mediation process, the leader should be a mirror that reveals what everybody sees in the landscape and a translator that permits to express and to discuss different points of view. These four experiences represent a first step in this direction.

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