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*EMERGENCE OF A TERRITORY PROJECT FOR THE DISTRICTS OF HUY AND WAREMME  
(BELGIUM): TOOLS, PARTICIPATION AND CONSTRUCTION*

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**Summary:** The emergence of a territory project built and shared by the actors implies the use of special methods which make it possible to transcend the private interest for the benefit of a territorialized community good. The example of the territorial project for the districts of Huy and Waremme (Belgium, 2007) makes it possible to put forward useful and diversified methods to cause and frame the debates, while taking into account the number, the representativeness and the diversity of the actors in a strongly diversified territory. It deals with the integration of the territorial observation in a territories development process and in the confrontation of the theoretical and pragmatic approaches.

**Résumé :** L'émergence d'un projet de territoire construit et partagé par les acteurs implique l'utilisation de méthodes particulières qui permettent de dépasser l'intérêt particulier au profit d'un bien commun territorialisé. L'exemple du projet territorial pour les arrondissements de Huy et de Waremme (Belgique, 2007) permet de mettre en exergue des méthodes utiles et diversifiées pour susciter et encadrer les débats, tout en prenant en compte le nombre, la représentativité et la diversité des acteurs dans un territoire fortement diversifié. Il traite de l'intégration de la veille territoriale dans un processus de développement des territoires et de la confrontation entre les approches théoriques et pragmatique.

**Keywords:** participation, territory project, cartographic package, territorialized community good

**Mots clés :** participation, projet de territoire, valise cartographique, bien commun territorialisé.



# Emergence of a territory project for the districts of Huy and Waremme (Belgium): tools, participation and construction

## 1. PREAMBLE.

The concretization of a participative process aiming at the creation of a territory project is not an easy task when this one is complex and its actors numerous. It is nevertheless the mission carried out by the Department of Fundamental and Applied Economic Geography (SEGEFA) of the University of Liege (Belgium) in 2007.

The process was initiated by the Employment and Training Subregional Committee of the districts of Huy and Waremme (CSEF-HW), decentralized body having a role of observation, dialog and initiative. This organization, which is composed among others by representatives of the employers and workers, has integrated a maximum of actors in a broad and multisectorial cooperation to effectively direct the Plan of Development Action (PAD) on the period 2007-2014. The PAD had to be based in priority on the axes determined during the participative process. In this way, the project was between a exercise of territorial prospective and a traditional project of systemic and participative development.

The situation of the districts of Huy and Waremme, transition areas between three important cities (Brussels, Liege and Namur) required a redefinition of its territory and the reinforcement of its identity. This need is mainly due to the weakness of the sub-regional strategic structures in Wallonia and to the vulnerability of the peri-urbanized rural areas, almost absent from the strategies of the big agglomerations.

In order to frame the process and to bring a critical view on the current situation, the CSEF-HW called on the SEGEFA which initially carried out a diagnosis en then leded workshops renamed for the occasion the “Tuesday of the development”. In a last more strategic phase, priority axes of development have been putted forward to constitute the base of the future action. The diagnosis phase lasted 3 months followed by the phase of cooperation of 2 months and the strategic phase of 1 month.

This article presents the experiment undertaken by the districts of Huy and Waremme which made it possible to set up a development strategy. The second chapter will highlight the reflections linked with the shared diagnosis, whereas the third deals with the construction of the project of territory. The fourth chapter will be the occasion to discuss the relations between the territorial intelligence on the one hand and the territorial strategy on the other hand, before concluding.

## 2. DIAGNOSIS AND SHARED ANALYZES.

The first stage of the process consisted of the realization of a preliminary diagnosis, based on the public statistics and various institutional information sources. This stage required a preliminary reflection concerning the spatial limitation of the analysis – or even of the project and of the level of the data accuracy required. This diagnosis was submitted to the actors to give rise to the territorialized reflection and the identification of the local stakes.

### 2.1 A tool at the base of the actors’ reflection: the cartographic pack

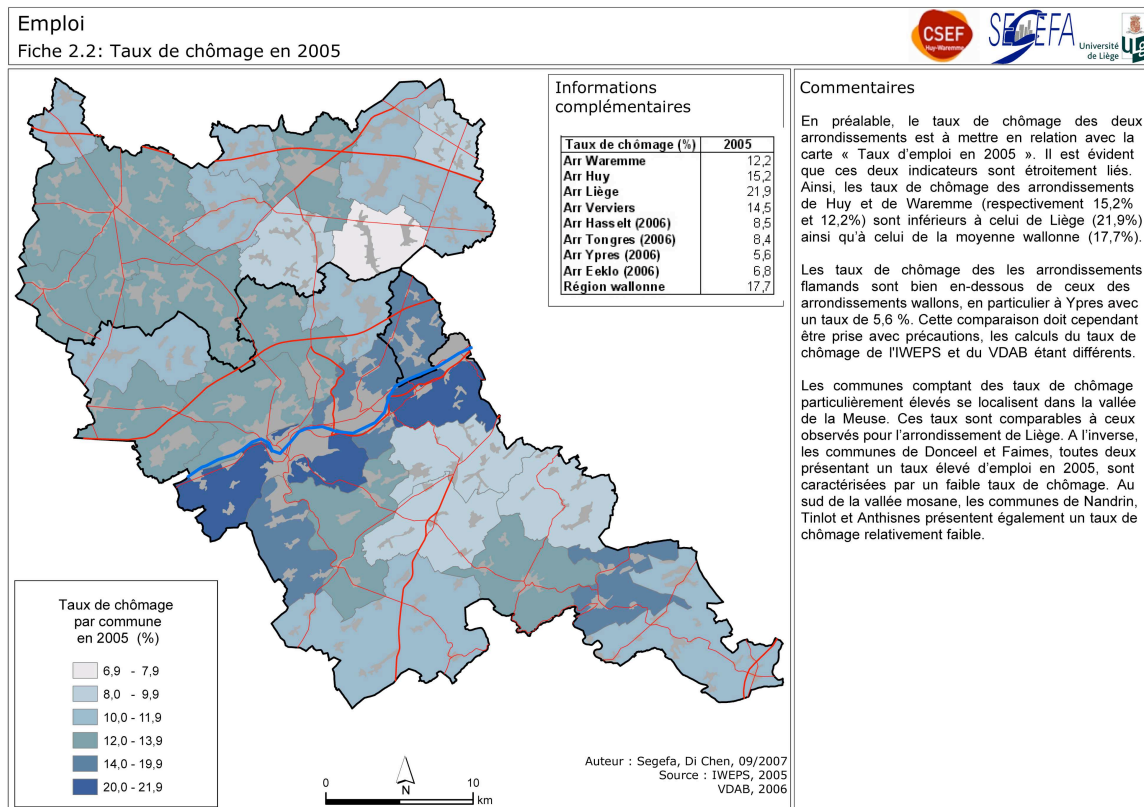
The use of an initial diagnosis to give rise to a justified and coherent reflection requires the use of methods and tools ready to challenge the various actors. It is a question of decreasing the blockages of the territory comprehension, in other words, to widen the knowledge of a maximum of the debates recipients. In parallel, the diagnoses are often perceived like unpleasing and incomprehensible, what considerably decreases their effectiveness and give them a secondary formal role. It is obvious that the lack of knowledge of the participants about the statistical data management is an important difficulty, but surmountable, in order to maximize the efficiency of the debates.

Within the framework of territorial development study, the cartographic representation makes it possible to overcome these recurring problems. Firstly, the cartography spatializes the information visually, what allows an increased comprehension of the dynamics and disparities of the territory. In the second place, the maps give a



thematic synthesis and substantially more readable than the data tables. Lastly, although these representations have many other advantages, they are more didactic and better perceived than the raw data. Nevertheless, these qualities should not make forget that the reading of charts is not an innate skill, and that they can be badly interpreted. Others critical can be addressed to the simplicity of representation masking the complexity of the indicators. These lacks are inevitably and basically related to the definition of the cartography itself, and are abundantly described in various sources (e.g., CAUVIN 2007).

Before the roundtables about the development of the District of Huy and Waremme, a cartographic package was created and distributed to the participants. It was the synthesis of the pre diagnosis, compiled in 42 thematic cards and maps. Figure 1 represents one of these thematic cards with the cartography of an indicator, a short comment accompanying it and reference data for other spatial entities (higher administrative levels, but also certain similar districts). The comparisons inside and outside the territory gives a clear idea of the district in comparison with its environment. In addition, certain diachronic data give a temporal analysis highlighting the territory dynamics in its environment.



The participants used the provided maps, which were the support of the identification of certain localizable problems and the vector of complementary analyzes by the actors themselves. To argue their remarks, certain actors asked for additional cartographies notably in the matters related on teaching, or the infrastructures.

The schematization realized at different scales made it possible to specify the place of the studied territory in the regional and national context: the two districts saw their shared diagnosis directed according to its status of transition zone between major poles.

The evaluation of this tool is positive, for the piloting team and for the participants. She allowed to overcome the blockages of the information diffusion, and was really the basis of an accurate and shared analysis. This method of validation and of iterative correction seems to be an effective and interactive mean to build up the shared diagnosis.

## 2.2 Relevant territory and territory of action

The main participative territorial development projects run up from the start against the difficulty in determining a relevant territory of work to carry out the collective project in the long term. Indeed, it seems that the

realization of a participative process within a territory having a strong identity and a feeling of membership supports the emergence of common objectives with a consensual vision of the territory development. This principle was many times confirmed by the field experiments, which confirms it as an unavoidable good practice for any exercise of territorial prospective or development project of the territories.

By selecting borders authorizing homogeneity of space and of the individuals' practices in society, it is not necessary any more to be focused on complex internal disparities: without gumming spatiality, it is possible to isolate a single spatial system and to decrease the number of variables to be taken into account. In this way, the objectives laid down adapt themselves in a more relevant way to the territory of action and have adaptability to the temporal variations. Moreover, the identity feeling of the local actors within the perimeter supports the interpersonal contacts and the development of strategies located by the actors.

Nevertheless, the relevant territory rarely corresponds to the territory of action: the historical administrative cuttings are far from being superimposed on the current lived or relevant spaces. In addition, one could assert that these territories will evolve and that it will be necessary to modify the paradigm of the territorial organization to be able to relevantly adapt to the changes.

The districts of Huy and Waremme do not escape this report in a complex institutional context. They partially contain agro-geographical zones but also strongly differentiated "basins of life". It is about an institutional reality which subjects the theory the practice proof: whereas the territories are varied (all things considered), the levers, notably decisional and of financing, have scales and territories superimposed on a previous cutting. It was thus necessary in this context to take into account a complementary variable of system, taking local specificities into account.

A dual reflection results, on the one hand an often theoretical reflection related to the relevant territory, and a reflection which we can describe as pragmatic related on the conditions of realization, on the silent partners or on the recipients. The participative process confronts the latter with the "lived territory", perceived as a concrete entity (geomorphology, urbanization, etc) or abstracted ("basin of life"). The research of a point of balance results which cannot completely be freed from the administrative limits, bases of a big number of levers. It is not useless in this context to subdivide the territory in spaces of increased coherence and to apply policies appreciably different to them by increasing their relevance.

### **2.3 Selection of the indicators**

The selected indicators should allow to make a report of the situation of the studied territory the most accurately possible. It was moreover necessary to deal with the information legibility, and thus to limit the volume of information, by carrying out a selection of relevance based amongst other things on the action fields of the local actors, of the spatial level of the information and the representativeness of the indicators.

The indicators were distributed according to 6 topics (population, employment, economic activity, territory, tourism, agriculture). Together, they make it possible to get various dimensions of the territory which are conventionally quantified: in this way, they make a report of the socio-economic state of the districts.

Certain data were charted independently of the administrative limits, because they correspond to ad hoc or spatially limited objects (classified buildings, infrastructures, zones of economic activity, etc). This type of representation made it possible to show the spatial relations between the structuring elements of the territory, and to spatially determine with accuracy projects to carry out.

## **3. CONSTRUCTION OF THE TERRITORY PROJECT**

The construction of the territory project was carried out in a collaborative and interactive way, between the various actors directed by the management team. The relations between the actors were planned and channeled during meetings which took various forms according to the successive phases of reflection.

### **3.1. Selection of the participants on the roundtable conferences**

No direct selection was carried out for the participants on the roundtable conferences: the organization of those was publicly mentioned on Internet and in the local press which relayed information on several occasions. Voluntarily, the representation of the various sectors was however supported by invitations targeted on the basis



of a local actors listing of the silent partner of the study. It is undeniable that a big part of the present people was justified by the direct invitations.

During these roundtable conferences, initiators of local good practices were also invited to present their projects in introduction of each meeting: these people were directly selected on the basis of the known or less known experiments of the area which obtained good results. These initiatives were noticed via networks of actors already present in the districts of Huy and Waremme, or via the media, and more particularly the regional press.

### **3.2. Sets of themes approached**

The topics approached during the participative process were selected on the basis of their coherence, the effective levers at the disposal of the local actors, notably the town and country planning, energy, education sectors, etc. The topics consequently approached during the roundtables were the territorial attractiveness, the energy and sustainable development, the companies, the services and trade, the construction sector, the tourism and culture, the agriculture and horticulture, and finally the territorial planning and the infrastructures.

These topics were selected in cooperation with the representatives of the local actors and the management team. All in all, they make it possible to perceive in a systemic way the territory dynamics, and to identify the strategic axes which will make it possible to increase the territorial competitiveness.

### **3.3 Roundtables sets of themes and transverse conference**

Two methods were employed to confront the actors with the diagnosis and the actors between them, so that emerges a common vision of the projects to carry out. Those are based on the cooperation and the dialog:

- The method employed during the “Tuesday of the development” consisted in a separation in different phases of the reflection and an orientation of this towards concrete actions to be carried out. All in all, a presentation of the diagnosis intervened at the beginning of the meeting, followed by talks of good practices. Then, the debate started. At the beginning of a phase, the debate generally focused on the critic of the diagnosis and its possible adjustment. In a second part, the actors exposed themselves the tendencies observed in the territory and the axes of development which they wished to develop.
- The final conference aimed primarily to validate the strategic axes highlighted before and to specify the projects to carry and their coordinators. By small groups, the participants alternated regularly in the workshops which each specifically aimed an axis of development. The organizers brought back the preceding discussions and managed the debate to obtain, by successive adjustments, precise built projects of which the details had been discussed. The representatives of the various organizations (institutions or associations) also could discuss the practical methods of future organization and the follow-up of the actions.

The participants were globally satisfied with the roundtables and also with the different activities during the conclusive conference. The questionnaires of satisfaction show that 82% of the participants are said satisfied or very satisfied with the discussion, which should not mask a strong variability: the meetings managed in a more rigorous way were globally more appreciated. The principal criticism was related to the speaking time of the participants (weak limitation) or to the absence of concrete actions emergence in phase of cooperation. At the end of the conclusive conference, this observation was not picked out any more, the objective having been reached.

A recurring criticism also came from the representativeness of the participants: *a posteriori* the diffusion of the roundtables organization was insufficient not enough followed by the communes and the authorities in general. Although a significant share of the local actors representatives was present (trade union, employers, communal or regional services, etc), the recurring question of the democratic legitimacy was asked. The projects highlighted have to take account of this irrefutable fact while concentrating on fields left vacant by the other actors.

The participants permanently underlined the need for ensuring the timelessness of the involved process. One of the major fears was to see the projects discontinued, because of a lack of regular follow-up and of a permanent dynamism. They thus proposed the implementation of regular meetings, forums, conferences and roundtables conferences, and of tools of permanent follow-up.

### **3.4 Territory Project**



The actors confirmed during the conclusive conference five strategic axes of development. It is the identification and the valorization of a strong image of the territory, the development of specific activities, the legibility and the effectiveness of the actors' networks, the formation, and the management of the territory in the direction of the sustainable development.

The various axes are strongly inter-connected and their leading projects accurately identified. One of the major stakes is to ensure the coherence of the territory by affirming its particular characteristics and to thus return an image to it, which remained until now latent. This image is at the same time the trigger element, and the strategy spearhead of the two districts.

The second major stake is the networking and the efficiency increase of the strategic information scanning system. As a corollary, the implementation of management tools and of information circulation notably thanks to the new technologies of information and communication seem to have to allow a better information circulation.

#### **4. STRATEGY AND TERRITORIAL INTELLIGENCE**

The clarification of the relations between strategic development of the territories and territorial intelligence is, in our opinion, little developed until now, and this essential articulation, appears rejected in second plan. Nevertheless, these links are regularly implied and developed under another term. It is certainly advisable to attach a certain importance to it in order to specify, within the framework of the development of the territories, the possible complementarities of the approaches.

In 2006, Philippe Destatte (DESTATTE, 2006) specified in his guide of the territorial prospective that from this process emanated two products: the first being the constitution of a “interactive process of collective intelligence and mobilization of the actors”, and in addition a strategic phase which “works out precise answers to the stakes of identified long run”. The terms are not innocuous, because they make it possible to detect the link between, on the one hand the capacity of adaptation to the environment modifications, and on the other hand the necessary strategic vision which makes it possible to direct the future of the territories.

This vision of the intelligence as capacity is also raised by Philippe Dumas (DUMAS, 2008) who moreover shows the differences in acceptances of the term “intelligence” according to the Anglo-Saxon pole or the Latin view, he also underlines the fact that in the first case the intelligence suggests the exploitation of the data, and in the second case an adaptability and a management facing new situations. In fact, these definitions are not paradoxical and place the territorial intelligence at the same time as produces and bases of strategies.

Firstly as substrate, by increasing the network and coherence effects, and by accentuating the positive effects of the strategic information scanning system. This approach is not without link with the economic intelligence. It constitutes a continuous process of evaluation and collection of opportunities in a broad network of actors, institutionalized as well as private. In a way, this concept can be attached to a development strategy only based on the territorial intelligence as a cognitive process.

Secondly as produces, being able to be the emanation of a development strategy and set up by it. We note that in the long term, both cases carry out the territorial intelligence to play a collector and treatment role, bases of future strategic actions. Where this cognitive process is not present, it can be the integrated product of a development strategy.

The territorial intelligence can thus be an integral part of a permanent strategy in constant renewal. In addition to bringing material, it authorizes corrections by successive adjustments of the policies as well as sectoral or multidisciplinary innovating strategies answering new opportunities. The formatting of the information for the target actors – a broad representative panel of the various groups of actors institutionalized or not – partially answers the accessibility problems of the new governorship. The study case of the districts of Huy and Waremme also showed that the territorial intelligence and its implications in terms of territorial development are required by a growing number of actors in lack of local information and treatment of those.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

The districts of Huy and Waremme are transition territories slightly structured between the poles of Namur, Liege and Brussels. Having to face the negative externalities of the metropolisation and the challenges of the



suburbanization, the territory is devoid of own strategy, capable strategy to register this territory in a prospective process. It is to answer this deficiency that the local actors wished to develop their own strategy to direct the future of the development and to realize the districts at the intern and regional level.

The case study of the districts of Huy and Waremme shows that, unfortunately, the territory of action can strongly differ from the relevant territories, and that it is difficult to deny this irrefutable fact. Indeed, the actors, but also the political and financial levers, are partially structured on administrative cuttings obsolete considering certain aspects. In this context, it is nevertheless not impossible to carry out a project of territory with the actors.

The use of the cartographic package as mode of representation of the diagnosis made it possible for the actors to appropriate this one and to highlight the challenges of the territory. It was the fertile substrate of justified and coherent discussions taking into consideration field reality. The modes of discussion were also interesting since they made it possible by successive adjustment to determine the strategic axes to develop and the projects to carry out to concretize them.

The actors pled for a continuous and iterative approach of the process in order to collect the opportunities and to adapt the strategies in a permanent way. For this purpose, tools must be improved to collect the information, to concentrate it and diffuse it by reinforcing the strategic information scanning system.

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