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**“Residencies in public institutions  
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R

A panoramic view of a city, likely Brussels, seen from a high vantage point. The foreground is a lush green field. The city below is densely packed with buildings, including many tall apartment blocks. In the distance, there are rolling hills under a clear blue sky. On the right side of the image, there is a red speech bubble with a white letter 'R' inside it.


This booklet has been made from the chapter titled: “Residencies in public institutions supporting local transition to sustainable ways of living” by François Jégou and Stéphane Vincent presented at the Human Cities festival May 6th to 16th 2010 in Brussels and published in a catalogue titled Human Cities, Celebrating Public Space, edited by Barbara Golicnik Marusic, Matej Niksic and Lise Coirier and published by Stichting Kunstboek in Brussels in April 2010.



## **Introduction**

The 27e Région is a French public innovation laboratory based in Paris. It was created as a joint initiative of ARF, the national association of French regions and FING, a think tank focused on the use of information technologies for social change. The political objective of the 27e Région is to foster innovation and sustainability in public institutions, to renew regional policies and to test on a large scale, and within a network, new forms of territorial engineering and design. Still today, actions in the public area tend to be compartmentalized, preventing cross-fertilization between sectors and paradigmatical

changes. The methods inherited from management, auditing, consulting and techno-economic innovation tend to demonstrate their inefficiency in the face of the increasing complexity and interdependence of environmental, climatic, social, economic, cultural and technological issues (Durance et al., 2008, Jouen 2009). Today public markets produce school buildings, services and public procedures that do not take users into account and even force them into ready-made solutions.



Since its creation in 2008, the main activity of the 27e Région has been to promote Territoires en Résidences, a series of in vivo innovation sessions settled in public institutions in French regions. Its core idea is inspired by long-term artist residencies in a particular context for the purpose of generating new projects in collaboration with the local population.

The multidisciplinary team of Territoires en Résidences settles for three separate weeks over a four-month period in a college, health centre, neighbourhood digital services places or the regional council administration itself. Their goals are twofolds: to co design with local stakeholders a future vision articulated in a set of long term scenarios, to implement a program of ready to start concrete shortmedium term actions and projects targeting the future vision. Immersion, it appears, is one way of starting a healthy dialogue and encouraging stakeholders' capacity-building, development, ongoing progress and rapid prototyping of new public services.

The launch phase of Territoires is a programme of 15 different residencies over two years. Begun in early 2009, seven residencies have successfully been completed and presented for mid-programme assessment in December 2009 at the French Regions Association annual congress. These field experiences are still very fresh and require more time to analyse in order to firmly cement what has been learned: the residencies trigger great enthusiasm, boost energies and catalyse change but they are only the first step of the long-term transformation of the host institution and its innovation processes. But the variety of residencies experienced so far, the number of stakeholders involved in the field or as observers, and the positive feedback already received encourage a first tentative analysis of the process.



Comment se passe une résidence?

**VISITE GUIDÉE**



**JOURNÉE DE RÉPÉRAGE**



**SEMAINE 1**



**INTER-RÉSIDENCE**



**SEMAINE 2**



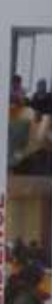
**INTER-RÉSIDENCE**



**SEMAINE 3**



**INTER-RÉSIDENCE**



Une résidence s'organise sur une période d'environ 3-4 mois. Elle est structurée en 3 semaines d'immersion précédées de journées de visite/répérages, entrecoupées de pause/maturation et suivies d'un travail de sédimentation/accompagnement.

La première semaine est consacrée à l'écoute en profondeur, à l'identification des acteurs et de leurs intentions; la seconde semaine vise à susciter et faire converger les projets; la troisième vise à partager et structurer le programme de transformation initié.



## Residencies in public institutions as a new mean of regional innovation

Residents were involved in a three-level research process: experimenting with participatory innovation via immersion with the local population; documenting each residency and feedback; and reorienting methodology.

The Resident Guide and associated tool box (Figure 1 and 2) describes a partially guided flexible approach based on long periods of immersion in the host residence; a design-driven multidisciplinary creative team of three to four young designers, architects, sociologists, social entrepreneurs, or artists united by a design mindset; ethnographic-like observation and participative design techniques; selforientation of the field work; co-design of the brief of the residence; iterative loop process between long-term vision and emblematic implementation, envisioning and simulation, experimentation and programming...

The emerging Territoires en Résidences format is not new; it is part of a design approach to support social innovation in general (Jégou et al. 2009 and 2008; Manzini 2009, Mulgan 2006 and 2007, Thakara 2005) and situated participative innovation processes in particular (Leadbeater 2004, Dear Architect 2007).

It has been here streamlined to adapt to multipurpose innovation in the public sector. It was conceived within the current attributes of the regions in France – education, health, transport, work, etc. – but can be applied in any kind of public institution, civil society organization, government body, or public service: city, urban agglomeration, neighbourhood, etc.

Beyond the character of localized innovation sessions and their apparent capability to trigger social change, we will take a broader

◀ **Figure 1 and 2: Resident Guide presenting the state of the art of the residence methodology (top)**  
**Resident Guide presenting the process after one year of experimentation (down)**  
**(photographs: François Jégou).**

perspective and consider a network of residences and their potential to engage the transformation of the territory at the regional scale. Our hypothesis here is that residences are a flexible and efficient format of innovation on the territory.

Based on the nature and experience of the few residences currently completed, we will try to show how this format addresses an intermediate level of experimentation deeply rooted in local contexts and territorial contexts.

We will also try to imagine how a projected network of self-standing but connected residences (experimentations) may generate a dynamic of territorial transformation via a relatively light and resilient process.






## **Innovation between macro top-down projects of territorial development and micro bottom-up social initiatives.**

### **An intermediate level of innovation on the territory**

Residences produce innovation processes rooted in the social fabric. Long periods of immersion make it possible to grasp the spirit of the place and to build trust with its inhabitants. In Revin, Champagne-Ardenne Region, Territoires en Résidences settled in a college (Figure 3) and right away developed empathy and understanding with the local population, living among the degraded infrastructure of a 1970s working class neighbourhood and in a territory devastated by unemployment. The region has appropriated 38 million euros to build a brand new building based on plans displayed in the college entrance hall, but the project remains a question mark for everybody working there. As one regional manager said, 'We are building new hardware and we completely forgot the software...' The residence focused on connecting a social project with the architectural one, and on how can to interest the college population by catalysing various isolated initiatives into one social project in which they all believed. A future vision rapidly emerged from conversations: an open campus. A place that is not a burden for the territory but a resource, open to the surrounding neighbourhood, to the city of Revin, and to nearby villages and territory. A dozen of projects have been consolidated during the period of residence, involving scholars in the promotion of local tourism, opening the college as a local conference hall for companies, organizing an annual fair for local NGOs, opening a new section teaching eco-construction...





This example shows the clear potential of residences to be an intermediate level of innovation on the territory between macro top-down development and micro bottom-up initiatives: it starts with the local population, taking into account their concerns and engaging them to invent their own process of change. But the innovation process goes potentially far beyond the specific initiatives of a small group of social innovators. The population directly or indirectly includes scholars, professors, administrative and technical staff and their related families, more than 3,000 people... And the actions and projects are not only related to themselves but address the surrounding territory. The college's experience becomes a flagship for other colleges of the region (even before the social or infrastructural transformation has taken place) and induces a willingness in others to try similar experiences: in Tinquieux, in the same region, another residence has just begun and the emerging future vision is clearly aligned: a High Human Quality college<sup>4</sup>. The college, from a closed institution dedicated to teaching, emerges as a hub for local social initiatives.

## Intermediation between grassroots initiatives and local governance

The intermediate level of innovation of Territoires en Résidences, beyond the dimension of the process on the territory, relates to the capabilities of intermediation between top-down and bottom-up they represent. In Rennes, in Bretagne, more than 1,600 residents are members of a local social digital network called La Ruche<sup>5</sup>. The network has been created and is animated by the NGO Bug where a residence settled. The initial motivation was to question the role of local social networks relative to the success of Facebook and Twitter. Individuals joined La Ruche more out of sympathy than to really use it, and though it claims many members, it doesn't seem to increase nor to develop real applications. An augmented citizenship proposed to use the local digital network to foster social initiatives and local change.


It focuses on promoting La Ruche by connecting its members to the

◀ **Figure 3: In Revin, Champagne-Ardennes Region, a new social project emerged from the residence: building an open campus as a resource for the surrounding territory (photographs: Matthew Marino, François Jégou).**



LA RUCHE BETA





rest of the Rennes population and making existing and potential applications visible in order to foster new ones. Initial ideas have appeared counter-intuitive at first: displaying the screen-prints of the digital map of La Ruche on public display; printing with ephemeral water jets process digital messages selected from La Ruche user dialogues to induce participation; installing signs inviting people to join La Ruche car pool stops (Figure 4).

In addition to social network use to enhance local elective connectivity within the population, and the exploration of bridging modes between the digital and the physical to reduce the digital divide, residence results demonstrate an interesting capability of intermediation between grassroots initiatives and local governance.

Within a three week period, very small dimension citizens initiatives were displayed on public space and accessed towns advertising panels, and local authorities were enabled to spot promising social initiatives and catalyse them.

Residences seem to have a triggering effect and are an intermediate format of innovation to coordinate the bottom-up and the top-down, fostering innovation simultaneously at both levels, outlining solutions that spur social innovation and at the same time generating the appropriate framework that will enable their development.

## A light real-size experimentation playing the role of a demonstrator


The overall financial and political costs of residences are relatively minor. Indirect social and infrastructure costs in case of failure are relatively low and limited to a localized mistakes compared in case of success to the potential benefits of both a real-size experimentation and the creation of a demonstrator.

In Pionsat, a village in the vast, empty rural area of Auvergne, a residence has been organized to rethink the Maison de Santé, an initiative to maintain basic medical services in rural areas that lack doctors and medical infrastructure (Figure 5). But again, a new

◀ **Figure 4. In Rennes, in Bretagne, the residence played an interesting role of intermediation, promoting projects between a grassroots local digital network and the town authorities (photographs: Jacky Foucher, Pierre Cahurel).**







building doesn't solve the problem, neither in terms of attractiveness for young medical doctors nor of spontaneous adhesion from rural patients. The residence focuses on fostering dialogue. Many use cases allow improving mutual understanding between the different players.

The residents settle on a bench during the weekly street market to engage co-design with the population. Current doctors and local authorities collaborate with patients to imagine the Maison de Santé in terms of functionalities and related health services such as home care kits and travelling medical doctor equipment.

The Maison de Santé has begun to exist as a shared collective request of all different local stakeholders.

The residence embodies the project before it starts and attracts political visibility as an experiment in progress. The residence is thus a simulation of the future partnership between stakeholders to implement the Maison de Santé. All this is achieved in a relatively short time and at low cost.

◀ **Figure 5. In Pionsat, in Auvergne, a residence activate strategic conversation between the local stakeholders to create a rural health centre (photographs: Julie Bernard, Marie Coirié).**





## Conclusion

Residences seem to represent a light format of innovation (in time, money, risk, involvement) and they are intensely localized (based on field work and local participation). They don't require high level political decisions or involvement, are relatively short-term and recognized as being experiments. They address an intermediate level of innovation, are suited to the territory level, mediate between micro and macro levels, and become demonstrations of what could be: a concrete, sufficiently developed experiment with tangible results generated by ample participation. They can represent a significant step forward both in political terms and from project point of view.

### A mosaic of tentative innovations

Residences represent a space where risk can be taken, where traditionally inertial and conservative public institutions can challenge routine processes, try innovative ideas and experience failure without fear. They maintain their experimental dimension throughout the process of transformation. Where the classical public development model is based on a small-scale pilot project followed by large-scale implementation, Territoires en Résidences resembles a succession of pilot projects, maintaining energy, freshness, and flexibility in the local context. It's an active learning and research process. At the territorial level, it's a molecular transition process based on the accumulation of local independent actions. Compared to burdensome territorial development based on planning, failure of one residence doesn't endanger the whole territorial transition. The systemic level is reached progressively but not addressed at first sight: as already shown above, the Champagne-Ardennes Region is progressively exploring the college of tomorrow, not as a futuristic fixed brief but towards a permanent state of experimentation in all 80 regional colleges (Figure 6).

◀ **Figure 6: Champagne-Ardennes regional authorities begin a residence in second secondary school in Tinquieux outlining the willingness to establish residences as a permanent renewal and stimulation process for all regional secondary schools (photographs: Gabi Farage, Olivier Bedu)**

## **A network of local transformations in synergy**

The residences are connected and subject to continuous mutual influence. Regular inter-residence meetings aim to improve the methodology but also to serve the metalevel of territory regional transition. Lessons learned are reported to the Association of the French Regions (ARF) for cross-fertilization. Within the same region, a programme of more residences will serve the strategic transformation of the territory. This scheme is currently being explored by the Nord-Pas de Calais Region: the Direction of Future Research and Sustainable Development is organizing a residence within a foresight exercise on suburban areas. This residence is meant to be the first of series to monitor critical needs and dynamize Regional Council policies.

## **Open questions and follow-up**

Residences represent a potential format for fostering transformation at the territory level, a network of independent, localized innovation processes acting in synergy toward larger scale transformation of the territory. This transformation is based on a permanent state of interconnected experiments in order to ensure continuous questioning of the changing process and increased resilience. This challenge will require exploring open questions at various levels, such as: How to deploy the model within regional public institutions and beyond its administrative rigidity? How to track or form the local human resources necessary to gather enough professional teams of residents? How to project a dynamic and reactive programme of residences as the result of a top-down territory strategy and bottom-up pertinent initiatives?



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