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Pierre Alphan  ry, Agn  s Fortier, Anne Sourdril

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# Naturalist data between network and territory : building ecological network (TVB) in France

Pierre Alphandéry, Agnès Fortier & Anne  
Sourdril

ESRS Congress Chania – August 2011



# Introduction

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- Subject of the research we are presenting : building the French ecological network (Trame Verte et Bleue - TVB) in the context of growing concerns on biodiversity (Rio Convention on Biodiversity 1992, Pan European network 1995...)

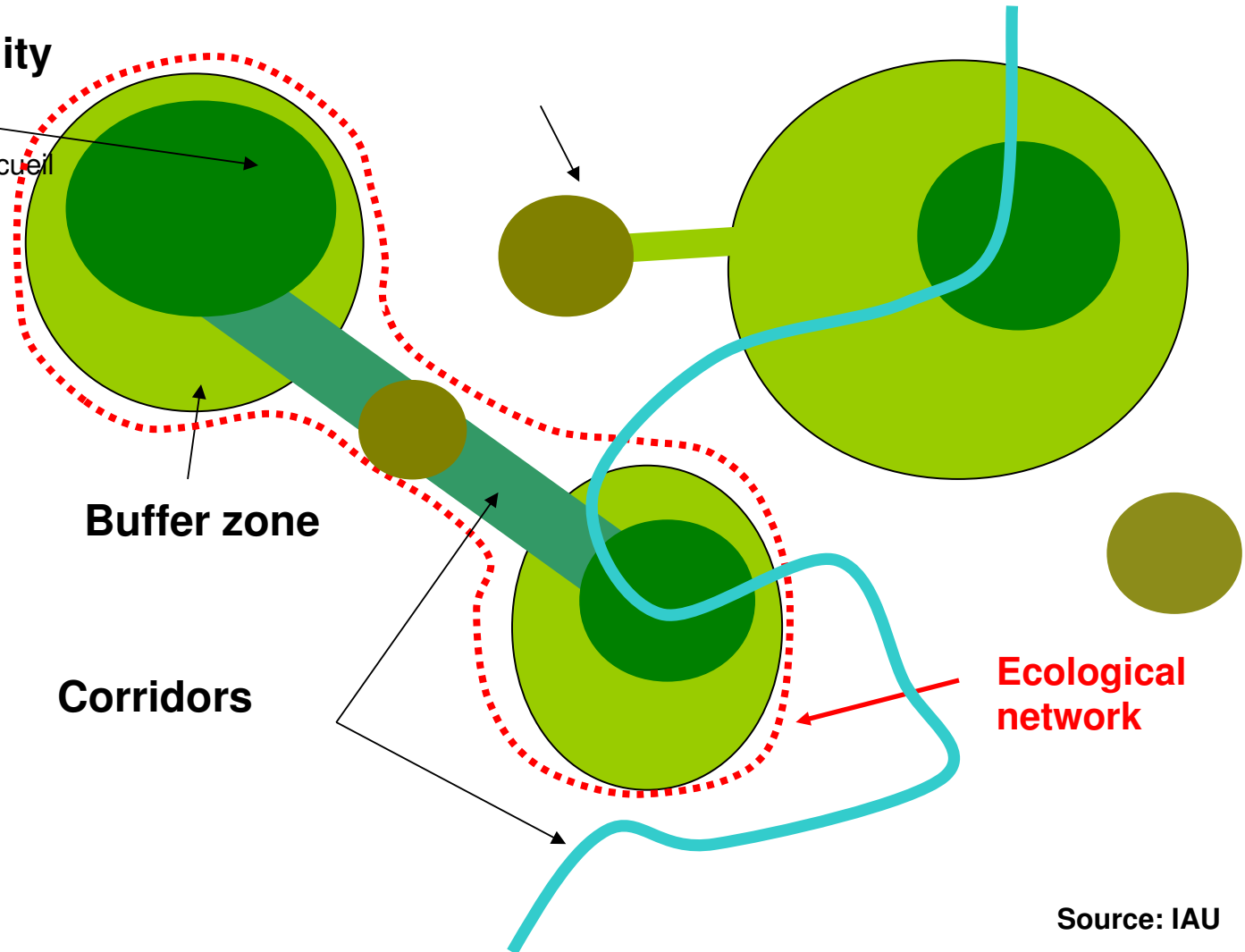
Our present subject: how knowledge and data are mobilized in the building of TVB?

- Plan :
  1. Context and point of view
  2. A specific case: building TVB in Ile-de-France
  3. Drawing general knowledge from local cases: the power of knowledge

# What's an « ecological network »?

## Areas of high ecological quality (Hotspot)

(fortes potentialités d'accueil pour la biodiversité)









# The trame verte et bleue :

## The French ecological network

- ❑ The French Trame Verte et bleue is the outcome of a large agreement. It has been recently taken from an institutional process known as « Grenelle de l'environnement » and drawn up as a land management tool.
- ❑ The implementation of TVB takes place in a moment marked by a large debate about risks on biodiversity in terms of mobilization for life and fragmentation of ecosystems. Building up the ecological network aims to give more importance to the actions taken in France in this domain.
- ❑ With this French specific policy the State provides a strong impulsion while giving to local collectivities a large place in setting up the ecological network. The scheme of TVB links three scales: national, regional and local.

# The point of view

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- The setting up of TVB needs the capture of different ranges of knowledge (scientific, linked to management or to uses of space, and so on) matched to various conceptions of territory.
  
- Hypothesis: The specificity of knowledge and data collected and used highlights the various conceptions of TVB that we have divided in two main groups:
  1. The ecological network considered as a territory project gathering habitats and space users,
  2. An approach to this network characterised by a dominating naturalist conception (with a large place given to experts and scientific knowledge).

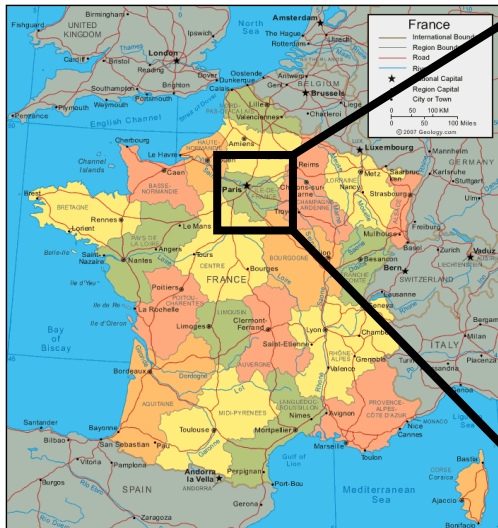
**Case study : Building the TVB  
through official data  
modelling in Ile de France**



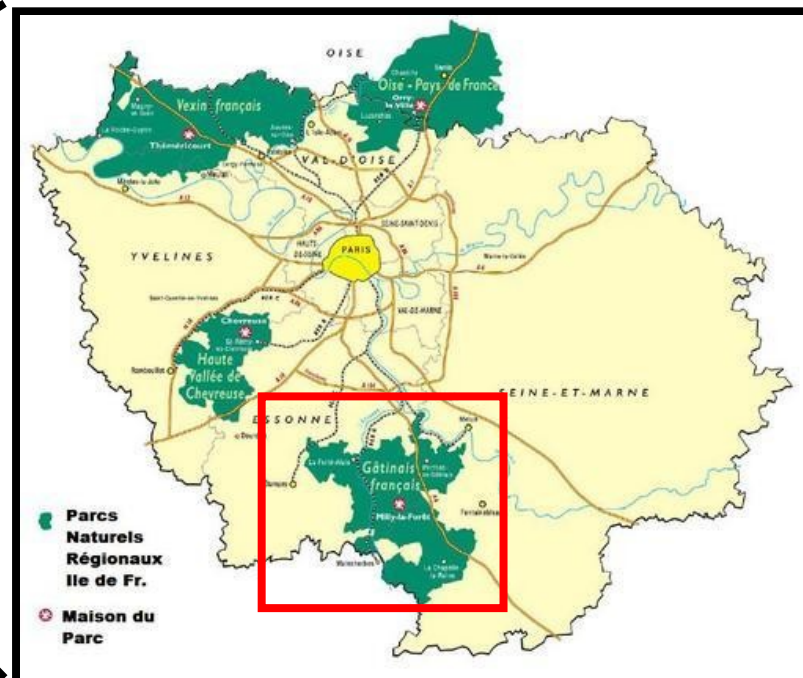


# Attempts to identify TVB in Ile de France

- Following the “Grenelle de l’environnement”, the Francilian Parcs Naturels Régionaux (PNR) are trying to identify ecological continuities that should be protected on their territory,
- PNR: institutions created to combine development with nature conservation in rural spaces,
- The case of the PNR du Gâtinais Français which used the help of an environmental agency – seconded by local experts – to model the ecological continuities.

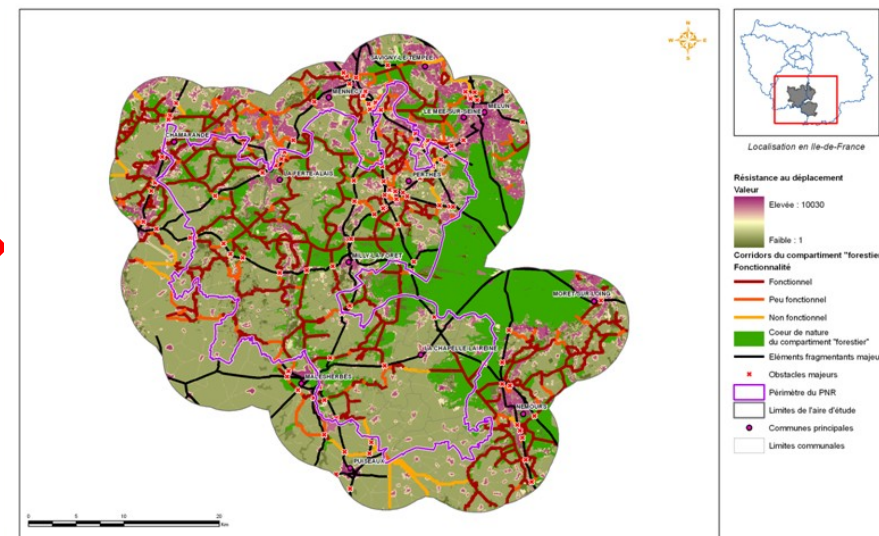
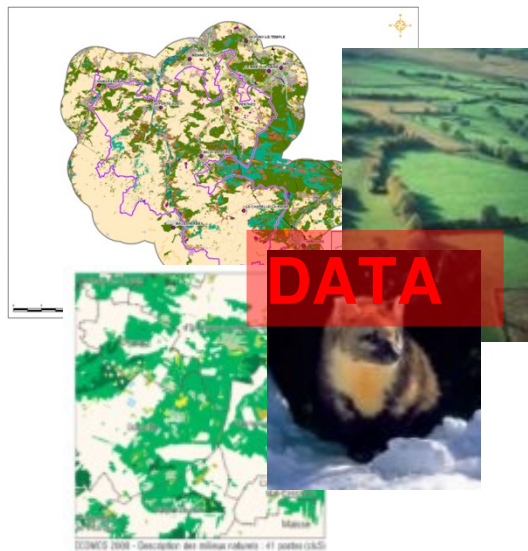


PNR Gâtinais 70km SE from Paris



# Identification methods of « ecological corridors »

- ❑ Modeling work was funded on official data (MOS, ECOMOS) and naturalist data (inventories, trapping data...),
  - ❑ Comities with PNR agents, naturalists from the agency and local experts identify and verify the data availability and validate the modelling continuities.
- ⇒ Debates during comities dealt with the reliability of used data, of modelling methods and more generally with the reliability of results.



# Gaps between modelling and the local perception of territory

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- ❑ Gaps between quantitative official data and the local perceptions of the land: exclusion of meaningful spaces and species for local users and inhabitants.
  - ❑ Gaps between scale perceptions of territory: modelling perceives land at the PNR scale and local inhabitants have perceived it at a local scale.
- ⇒ Modelling limits: lay knowledge and non-official data kept away.



**Local key features of territory for residents are not integrated in official data bases**



# Different visions of land

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- ❑ Naturalist agency : patchwork perceptions of the PNR territory comprehended through available quantitative data (official data, current knowledge and empirical approaches)
- ❑ Local inhabitants: historical perceptions of local spaces comprehended through qualitative experience of the area have not been integrated in the official data base
- ❑ A better integration of the 2 types of knowledge and data could help the local TVB appropriation.



Perceive the TVB: knowledge and scale in question?



**What is the lesson of this case study :  
naturalist data between network and  
territory**

# Data : a social construction

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- ⇒ Data links with social groups which produce and use them. It reveals different conceptions of territory.
  
- ⇒ The production of data and the category they use are in relationship with the history and the context. These categories are not definitively fixed. They can be moved around with the emergence of new issues.



# Who is mobilized in the elaboration of TVB and what kind of tools ?

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- The experts (study centers) have a decisive role to the detriment of habitants and users knowledge (lay knowledge) ⇒ Priority is given to quantitative knowledge (public register of lands, inventory, database) rather than qualitative knowledge.
- The uses of sophisticated technology (modelling, ecological or territorial engineering) has raised many questions:
  1. Is it possible to construct interaction or social dynamics with other actors (non specialist for example) ? Complexity of technology makes the debate difficult and often produce exclusion of non specialist.
  2. Is it possible for local actors to appropriate the biodiversity conservation issue ?

# Cognitive and political issues about data

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- The development of policies in favour of biodiversity has led to a process of standardization of data. ⇒ The Ministry of Environment is setting up the National information system about nature and landscape (what we call in French SINP) and the Biodiversity observatory.
- The priority given to tools based on measure and calculations has been set up for 2 main reasons. In one way, because these tools are considered as apparently more scientific, and in the other way, because they facilitate the process of assessment of public policies.

The priority given to these tools has certain consequences. It tends to disqualify qualitative knowledge known to be less objective and more difficult to mobilise.
- The trust accorded by public power with expertise and quantitative data is linked to the neoliberal project based on efficiency of public management.

# Conclusion

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- ❑ The state of available knowledge combined with the type of knowledge used determine the layout of the TVB and its appropriation by local actors.
- ❑ The TVB increases the role of knowledge in territories and has an impact on the reconfiguration of power relationships.
- ❑ In the final analysis, the right data does not exist. It is supposed to be confronted with different kinds of knowledge in conjunction with ecological and socio-economic dynamics.
- ❑ The sophistication of the tools used in the elaboration of TVB has a fascinating role for many people in spite of their limits. Therefore, it is necessary to have a criticism approach to technology. Consequently, this has raised the question of the position of the researcher.
- ❑ What is the aim of TVB ? A naturalist way based on ecological engineering and expertise, or a TVB which combines aims like biodiversity but also current economic and social issues, etc. ? One or the other vision of the TVB determine the type of data, tools and procedures one can use.



**Thank you for your attention**

