
INODE ESTRIE



ISSUE: Building on mobilization and involvement from local communities

ITINERARY 3B

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PROMOTERS

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Presentation of the issue:

- according to Emploi-Québec, nearly 29,000 positions will need to be filled in organizations throughout the region, between 2011 and 2015;
- each year since the 2004-2005 period, net migration has been negative for the Eastern Townships, in the 15-34 age bracket. The positive balance for the 35-44 age group is not enough to void the accumulated deficit: the Eastern Townships lose more than two youths aged 15-34 versus a gain of one person in the 35-44 age group;
- according to the Institut de la statistique du Québec, half of the municipalities in the Eastern Townships (45 municipalities out of 89) experienced a population decline between 2001 and 2006; this situation continued between 2006 and 2011 with 47 municipalities in decline;
- there is a large pool of young people (about 35,000) pursuing a bilingual post-secondary education in the Eastern Townships;
- the influx of the retired baby boomers and the decrease in the workforce pose significant challenges for the Estrie region to ensure that they have sufficient qualified manpower. Except for agricultural villages located in the suburbs of the large cities experiencing an increase in population without applying any special measures, agricultural villages located more than 30 minutes from these urban centres are seeing their population stagnate or decline. Attracting new residents, and specifically young people, seems to be the solution, but remains a challenge in itself.

Needs for the region:

- equip the existing stakeholders so that they are able to interpret the youth migration situation and implement the measures that will have a positive impact at the source;
- work to support and complement the initiatives already in place within the municipalities and MRCs, and which address the different aspects of the migration routes of the region's youth;
- establish a more direct contact with Sherbrooke students and promote the region and its opportunities in sync with their situation.

Challenges:

- mobilize and circulate information to the various decision-makers (organizations, municipalities, MRC, region, etc.);
- offer personalized consulting (case by case) to each municipality;
- reach the young people in the right places, with the best approach;
- be complementary to the existing action plans within the municipalities, to the various development organizations and to the educational institutions.

To remedy this situation, the Eastern Townships developed a regional strategy: Inode Estrie, which aims to promote the welcoming and settlement of new residents, specifically for the young population, across the region.

Presentation of the project:

The developers began the presentation with a video from the project partners. A portrait of the situation was portrayed: weaknesses, threats and strengths of the community.

Inode Estrie proposes an action divided into two parts. First, Inode Estrie offers municipalities consulting support for the implementation of an action plan that will make them more attractive to future residents. At a rate of one municipality by MRC per year, the Community Development Officer provides support for a period of six to twelve months, to a municipal mobilization committee mandated to reflect and act specifically on the population issue.

Additionally, Inode Estrie offers a consulting service to the young people looking for a job and a place to live. Inode promotes internships, jobs or a stimulating environment for future residents of the Eastern Townships. The officer promotes internships with the local companies as a recruitment and development strategy. The Inode Estrie liaison officer works in tandem with migration officers from *Place aux jeunes* established in the region's rural MRCs. He focuses on the Sherbrooke educational establishments (pool of 35,000 students), while structuring a consulting service to support establishment within the territories of the region that are not serviced by a *Place aux jeunes* Program (City of Sherbrooke and Memphremagog MRC).

One of the challenges for Inode and the municipalities is to bring the young people back to their region after graduation.

Finally, Inode plays a welcoming and supportive role for the municipalities and the young people, and a liaison role between the municipalities, employers and possible future citizens, as well as with the regional stakeholders. It offers a personalized follow-up process.

RESEARCHER

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Summary of the researcher's presentation:

In turn, Mrs. Mahy stresses that a well-orchestrated welcoming process benefits the entire community. This is the "hosting-harvesting" concept. Communities have the ability to share, to imagine reality. We must focus on collective intelligence; there are always solutions we are unaware of, simply because the problem may be new.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful and committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."
— Margaret Mead —

Mrs. Mahy discusses the community of practice concept. A community of practice involves:

- a group of people;
- who gather physically or virtually;
- who share knowledge and tools;
- who interact on a continuous basis;
- who, together, develop a set of best practices.

A "World Café" was conducted with the workshop participants. The founder of this concept is David Isaacs. Instructions were given. Here are the questions asked and the ensuing ideas:

Question 1: What is our situation? What do we know how to do? What are the limits of our actions?

- there is: a proliferation of organizations; duplication; a lack of transition with the network of citizens and the policy;
- if we shoot all over the place, we won't have enough ammunition (we should limit our areas of focus);
- it is important to row in unison;
- we have knowledge about the territory;
- working for the long-term is a challenge;
- there is too much professional expertise, let us be united and work together;
- we can do it one step at a time;
- we should network between CLD, SADC, CDC, etc.

Question 2: What direction should we take? What should we do together? What could we do?

- we should go toward development;
- we should establish a democratization process;
- we should support the processes that target results;
- we should identify a real project, find the money later instead of doing the opposite, such as jumping on subsidies and initiating a project that does not meet a real need;
- we should step out of our comfort zone;
- we could give ourselves a common vision;
- we could consult among ourselves;
- we could create an international intra-regional cooperation.

Question 3: What do we do? What is our first step on day 1? What initiatives?

- we can use the Neighbors Day to develop stronger links with the other villages;
- we can bring together the different municipalities to discuss common issues;
- we can find young leaders and take actions to keep them in our midst;
- we can consult, hold kitchen meetings, take the time to talk among ourselves;
- if each person took on a particular task, we would go even further;
- choose a vision, choose a sector of activity;
- we could develop a participation method;
- we should believe in those who no longer believe in themselves;
- be indignant! they used to say.

The keys

The key elements to remember according to the promoters and researcher:

- animate and maintain partnerships: mobilize the regional, supra-local and local stakeholders around a common issue; identify solutions to be implemented by all; bring the stakeholders together regularly with a consistent thematic. Do not duplicate the role of other partners, but to act together. Find solutions to problems based on an interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary approach.
- cultivate the conditions to develop a shared leadership: involve the civil society in the search for solutions, in close collaboration with the development stakeholders; from local to regional, foster opportunities to work together and recognize the contribution and skills from the various players in the implementation of regional action. Accept the change in order to live a transformation, but accept its complexity;
- tools and events to showcase the youth, the people and the communities: gather attractive arguments within the environment, based on its distinctive features (photos, videos); structure the actions from the local participants in achieving the goal of welcoming better and more people in their territory (local action plan, open days); maximize the use of the content developed (e.g., websites, social media, local promotional tools); promote youth as an invaluable asset for the development of the businesses and communities (internships, start-ups, succession);
- train and evaluate ourselves: invest in continuous training to expand the network of skills, improve support and foster innovative ideas; take a step back by involving all the partners in order to gain perspective and improve our actions.

QUESTION PERIOD

Q.: Among the 300 young people contacted, how many actually settled?

A.: This is difficult to answer...

Q.: Do you also work by MRC or only by municipality?

A.: The support is offered by municipality. However, MRC des Sources worked on a welcoming policy for their territory, and we participated to a portion of the process.

Comment 1: We must attract new, but also seduce the existing residents. It is important to attract young people while they are in the region in order to bring them back once their studies are completed.

Comment 2: We must also attract large employers.

Comment 3: A high-speed Internet connection helps attract the self-employed workers. This is a priority!

Q.: Are we raising awareness on life in the Eastern Townships for the young people as early as grade school?

A.: High-schools in some regions have a *Place aux jeunes ados* (teenage center targeting migration, establishment, etc.), but there is nothing yet for grade schools...

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

NOTE: All linked documents (PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.) are only available in their original French version.

[PowerPoint from Katherine Gouin, Inode Estrie](#)

[Video *Discover the Eastern Townships with Place aux jeunes*](#)

[Video *Open Days on the Eastern Townships \(POSE\): Saint-Adrien*](#)

[Basic principles of a World Café](#)

[Word document from the World Café](#)

For more information on the community of practice concept, Etienne Wenger is a renowned author on this topic.