Animation guide

From the Natur'Adapt community

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Quotation from the book

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Introduction

The LIFE Natur'Adapt project is a collaborative effort to integrate climate change into the management of protected areas in France and Europe.

Planned over 5 years (2018-2023), it is coordinated by Réserves Naturelles de France and supported by a group of nine other partners, focusing on three areas:

- Development of tools and operational methods for managers of natural areas to help them adapt to climate change (vulnerability assessment and adaptation plan);
- Developing and leading a community focused on adapting the management of natural areas to climate change, in particular via the naturadapt.com platform;
- Activating all the levers (institutional, financial, awareness-raising, etc.) needed to implement adaptation in practice.

The various tools and methods were tested on six of the project's partner reserves, then reviewed and tested on 15 other sites, before being rolled out on a national and European scale.

2018 2019	2020	2021	2022 2023
CO-CONCEPTION de prototypes d'outils et de méthodes	**EXPÉRIMENTATION** des outils sur 6 Réserves naturelles	**TEST** des outils sur 15 espaces naturels protégés	**DÉPLOIEMENT** des résultats aux échelles nationale et européenne

As part of the LIFE Natur'Adapt project, the Tela Botanica association, with twenty years' experience in web networking and collaborative project management, was tasked with the emergence of the[1] epistemic community around adaptation to climate change: the Natur'Adapt community. Her responsibilities included the development of a web-based community platform and support for Réserves Naturelles de France in animating the community and *ultimately* managing the platform.

In order to help Réserves Naturelles de France become autonomous in its role as Natur'Adapt community coordinator, Tela Botanica took on this role at the start of the project, sharing its practices and knowledge of web tools for online collaboration. Réserves Naturelles de France quickly took over, with advice and support from Tela Botanica throughout the project.

The creation of the platform and the consolidation of the community that accompanies it require a long-term investment. It's crucial to recognize that this process doesn't necessarily follow the usual project timelines: the community itself influences the pace of animation, and the specificities of each community make the originality of each community animation plan. In the case of Natur'Adapt, we are currently witnessing the birth and strengthening of an attentive and partly committed community. Although initially restricted to members of the Natur'Adapt consortium, the platform has succeeded in attracting a large number of interested parties and contributors, growing to almost 1,300 members at present. The evolution of a community from its emergence to its influence is a process that takes several years, and requires constant work on community animation. The growth of the Natur'Adapt community is a positive sign, but it's essential that we continue to nurture this dynamic and support the community's growth.

This animation guide is structured in three main parts. Firstly, it provides an overview of community facilitation methods. The second part explores their specific application to the LIFE Natur'Adapt project. Finally, in the third part, it gives a concise presentation of the functionalities developed for this project, necessary for the life of the community and its animation.

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[1] See the definition on Wikipedia :
https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communaut%C3%A9_%C3%A9pist%C3%A9mique

Community management and collaborative projects

Since the advent of the Internet, users have rapidly come together on the various platforms available, such as mailing lists, blogs, forums, wikis, social networks, etc., to interact and create content collaboratively. This has given rise to online communities and collaborative projects. These communities, particularly open source communities, are fundamentally different from traditional organizations and have developed their own ways of operating.

One of the fundamental principles for encouraging the emergence of collaborative projects is the management of authorization and control. In this context, all possible levers are lowered to encourage members to take part in the action. Control is exercised a posteriori, while authorizations are granted a priori (for example, write access), which differs from highly hierarchical projects. This dichotomy can be found in Eric Steven Raymond's essay *The Cathedral and the Bazaar* (1999), which highlights the differences between a rigid approach, characterized by pre-established structure and strict organization (the cathedral), and a more flexible approach, which favors adaptability and creativity within a seemingly chaotic environment (the bazaar).

The support of collaborative projects and the animation of online communities have been the subject of numerous theories for many years, notably by Jean-Michel Cornu[2] .

For a community to work, it's important to use different levers, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Awareness-raising and education: It's important to educate community members about the importance of their active participation and the benefits that can be derived from it.

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[2] See Jean-Michel Cornu's bibliography on Wikipedia https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Michel_Cornu

it can bring to everyone. By highlighting the positive impact they can have, they'll be more inclined to get involved.

2. Facilitating contribution: Provide easy-to-use tools and platforms with few constraints to enable community members to create and share content. Encourage members to share their knowledge, ideas, skills and experiences.

3. Recognition and valorization: Set up recognition systems to showcase active contributors. This can take the form of articles about their contribution, the use and enhancement of their creation, badges, gamification rankings or even material rewards. Public recognition motivates members to continue contributing.

4. Collaboration and mutual encouragement: Encourage collaboration and information sharing between community members. Members should support and inspire each other, and work together to achieve common goals.

5. Constructive feedback: Encourage community members to provide constructive *feedback* on each other's contributions. This promotes learning and continuous improvement, and helps strengthen the bonds between members.

The first part of this guide is a reminder of the basic concepts of community animation, inspired by the work of J.M. Cornu.

The nine laws of cooperation according to J.M. Cornu

In his book "Coopération, nouvelles approches"[3] , J.M. Cornu proposes nine principles, presented as "laws".

These principles provide a foundation for understanding and animating an online community effectively. These principles are based on the observation of proven practices in online communities, as well as on the author's own experience in community animation.

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[3] "Cooperation, new approaches" by Jean-Michel Cornu, http://cornu.viabloga.com/texts/cooperation

1 - Non-consumable goods and an environment of abundance - Fostering an environment of abundance

To foster an environment of abundance, certain strategies are recommended. One effective approach is to provide the starting material for the project, taking particular care to reuse existing resources. This approach has the advantage of not starting from scratch, or in other words not starting from "a blank page", which can slow down participation. By using existing tools, members can quickly contribute to the project. It's also essential to encourage as many internal and external contacts as possible, so as to create an initial core of network members, conducive to collaboration and welcoming other members.

We also recommend promoting the use of free licenses. By opting for Creative Commons licenses (CC-BY, CC BY-SA) for content, the Open Database License (OBdL) for databases and the GNU General Public License (GPL 3) for web projects, you enable the reuse, improvement and distribution of existing resources. By also applying open source licenses to your own productions, you encourage their dissemination and offer the possibility of reusing them for other future projects. This approach encourages the circulation of knowledge and open collaboration, creating an environment of abundance conducive to innovation and community growth.

2 - Communities that last converge towards cooperation - Enabling the group to last in time

To ensure the group's sustainability and continuity, a number of steps need to be taken. Firstly, it is advisable to appoint a coordinator who will act as a point of reference for all inquiries within the group. This designation helps to establish a clear communication structure and facilitates the management of interactions between members.

Another measure is to make the project history visible and constantly updated. Easy access to all relevant project information enables new employees to quickly familiarize themselves with the project's evolution and past achievements. This makes for a smoother integration process, and helps everyone understand the project's context and challenges.

It's also important to adopt a transparent approach to the group's objectives, providing a clear vision of the means and actions to be taken. This transparency enables all members to understand the strategic direction of the project and to align themselves with common objectives.

Reducing constraints is another crucial aspect in ensuring the group's sustainability. For example, the use of free and open-source tools offers the advantage of minimizing the financial costs associated with the initial implementation of the project.

Last but not least, it's essential to ensure that the group's objectives are constantly adapted. As any project is subject to evolution and change, it is advisable to regularly redefine project objectives and the tasks assigned to members. This flexible approach, which adapts as closely as possible to the skills and contributions of each member, avoids getting stuck in a rigid, hard-to-adapt model, which could be perceived as cumbersome and restrictive. By allowing constant evolution, the group maintains its dynamism, creativity and ability to respond effectively to challenges and opportunities as they arise.

3 - Develop evaluation mechanisms by esteem

When it comes to developing evaluation mechanisms within a group, it is essential to put in place strategies designed to foster the esteem of each individual. Self-esteem is a driving force behind voluntary contribution, and is directly linked to the place, status and recognition a person is accorded. This can be achieved in a number of ways, including assigning specific roles to each member. By offering responsibilities and tasks adapted to each person's skills and interests, the group recognizes the value of each individual and fosters a sense of esteem and belonging.

Another important aspect is to provide feedback on everyone's contributions. The coordinator plays a key role here by providing communication channels such as newsletters, RSS feeds, or other appropriate means to inform contributors of the value of their efforts and the results achieved. This constructive feedback strengthens the motivation, confidence and commitment of group members.

However, it is also crucial to avoid excessive self-satisfaction. It's important that group members don't lock themselves into an overly egocentric view of their contributions. It's important to maintain a humble attitude, and to recognize that successes are the fruit of a collective effort, in which each individual plays an essential role.

Self-esteem is also nurtured when contributors are in a pleasant process of increasing their skills and knowledge on a subject. This objective can be achieved by providing them with educational resources such as practical guides or adapted training courses (e.g. face-to-face or distance learning). By offering opportunities for learning and personal development, the group is stimulated, the intrinsic motivation of contributors is fostered and commitment is maintained.

4 - Minimize the needs of departure and be attractive

As part of the principle of minimizing initial requirements, the role of the coordinator is essential. The coordinator plays a key role in alleviating the initial constraints so that they do not weigh heavily on the project's contributors. He or she ensures that the project is given the time it needs to prove its worth, and to ensure that the group progresses smoothly.

To this end, the coordinator undertakes to identify and reduce any potential obstacles to the launch of the project. He/she ensures that the necessary resources are adequately available and that they are used optimally. For example, this may involve looking for alternative solutions, using tools

or the establishment of strategic partnerships to share project costs and resources, etc. The evolution of the project is gradual, and the initial requirements are minimalist: it's important to give the project time to grow, to find its place and to adopt practices adapted to the different stages of its existence.

In addition, the coordinator is keen to present the project with an attractive visual identity, which is more appealing and engaging to stakeholders. Indeed, user-friendly interfaces and striking visuals aim to capture users' attention, create a pleasant visual experience and reinforce the overall appeal of the project.

Attractiveness is also a question of words: thanks to their commitment and vision, coordinators help to create an environment conducive to buy-in, commitment and the long-term success of the project. Oral and written communication are essential.

5 - Minimize the risk of failure by mastering critical tasks.

Critical tasks should be handled in the traditional way, by the coordinator, while simple tasks should be approached collaboratively, involving the group in their realization.

It is essential that specific roles can be assumed by other team members. For example, a task manager may be appointed, but all team members must be trained to replace him or her if necessary.

It's important to find ways of encouraging the delegation of tasks as far as possible, to avoid overloading the coordinator. Indeed, if all responsibilities fall on one person, this can lead to an excessive workload and compromise the smooth running of the project.

It is also crucial to ensure that the absence of one person's contribution does not jeopardize the whole project. In other words, if one person cannot

contribute for whatever reason, this should not compromise the overall success of the project.

6 - Time for opportunities.

The coordinator must encourage opportunities. On the whole, the coordinator plays an active role in seeking out and exploiting opportunities that can enhance the realization of the project. By being open to the group's ideas and identifying favorable opportunities, the coordinator helps to maximize the benefits and results of the project as a whole.

Examples:

1. A good idea emanating from the group: the coordinator must take concrete steps to transform this idea into concrete action. This involves recognizing the value of the group's contributions and putting them into practice, by putting in place the necessary means and resource people to implement them.
2. When a call for projects is published and corresponds to the project's objectives, it is the coordinator's responsibility to respond to it in order to continue to reduce the project's potential constraints and enable it to evolve over time. This involves carefully assessing the requirements and objectives of the call, then mobilizing the appropriate resources within the group to develop a solid and relevant response.
3. The coordinator must also be attentive to the various opportunities that may arise during the course of the project, whether internal or external. These may include participation in events, the formalization of strategic partnerships, the establishment of collaborations with other teams or organizations, and so on. The coordinator must remain alert to these opportunities and take the necessary steps to exploit them for the benefit of the project, his group and his community.

7 - Motivations - The coordinator and contributors must have a minimum of material security

So as not to hamper the motivation of those involved in a project, whether for professional or personal purposes, whether employees or volunteers, the coordinator and contributors must have a minimum of material security.

The coordinator must have the time required to devote himself fully to his role, without sacrificing or compromising his other responsibilities. This means that he must be able to free himself from tasks and assignments that could jeopardize his ability to carry out his coordination mission effectively. It is essential to ensure that he has adequate resources and support to focus on his coordination role. It often makes sense to dedicate a position to project/community coordination.

For their part, contributors need to feel secure in their commitment and contribution to the project. They must not fear any personal risks, particularly with regard to their financial liability. An example might be to vary the format of face-to-face or remote meetings, and to set up car-sharing schemes to limit travel costs. These few actions can easily enable people in financial difficulty to become fully involved in the project, while reinforcing an aspect of solidarity and mutual aid.

Ensuring minimal physical security creates a serene environment conducive to collaboration. The coordinator can concentrate on his or her tasks without major disruption, while contributors can engage with confidence, knowing that their interests and responsibilities are taken into account and protected. This physical security fosters a climate of trust and strengthens the commitment of all those involved in the project.

8 - Reduce the risks of participating - Contributors must be able to withdraw from the project at any time.

To enable flexible and voluntary participation, clear entry and exit gates must be established for registrations, unsubscriptions and contributions. This means that there must be procedures and mechanisms in place that enable contributors to join the project transparently and simply, and also to withdraw from the project if they wish. This ensures flexibility and autonomy for contributors, enabling them to take part in the project according to their own availability and interest.

In addition, it's beneficial to encourage open membership of different projects. This means that contributors have the opportunity to participate in several projects simultaneously, or to get involved in different projects, at different times and in different ways. This openness strengthens contributors' curiosity and commitment, as they can explore different fields and acquire new skills. It also encourages the exchange of ideas and best practices between different projects, fostering innovation and collaboration.

Allowing contributors to withdraw from the project at any time, while facilitating their participation and departure, creates a flexible and inclusive environment. Contributors feel free to commit according to their availability and interests, which in turn fosters motivation and satisfaction. Ultimately, this helps to maintain a constant flow of participation, arrivals and departures, as well as new ideas: an essential recipe for success and community dynamics, which requires animation to accompany the flow.

9 - Lowering the threshold for action - The coordinator needs to keep things simple and responsive

It's important to always keep the "K.I.S.S." principle in mind.[4] "Keep it simple, stupid!

Whether this applies to the interfaces to be used by contributors or to collaborative working methods.

To encourage contribution, we need to lower all thresholds that could potentially be a barrier to action. An enlightening example is the registration process: first of all, it should be made compulsory only for

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[4] KISS principle: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KISS_principle

actions that are indispensable. Many actions may not require a mandatory action, and may offer alternatives such as entering a nickname to post a comment or share information, rather than requiring you to log in. If the registration process is unavoidable for certain actions, then creating an account should require as little time and information as possible, ideally only an email is required. It's important to be able to quickly and easily access the action that required creation. A more complete profile can be completed later by the contributor, if desired.

To ensure a dynamic project, the coordinator must prioritize simplicity in his methods and processes. This means simplifying tasks, technical procedures and communications as much as possible, in order to reduce obstacles. By avoiding excessive complexity, the coordinator facilitates understanding and buy-in from contributors, which in turn fosters collaboration.

In addition, the coordinator must be responsive in his actions and decisions. This means being able to adapt to the group, respond to changing project needs and seize opportunities as they arise. Being reactive helps to capitalize on good ideas and maintain a constant momentum in the project. The coordinator must be attentive to feedback and requests from contributors, and act proactively to respond effectively.

By adopting a simple, responsive approach, the coordinator facilitates project management and maintains a positive dynamic. Simplicity promotes clarity and fluidity, while responsiveness enables opportunities to be seized. By offering tools that are easy to learn and use as needed, the coordinator enables an emerging idea to see the light of day quickly. These two aspects contribute to maintaining good communication and harmonious collaboration within the group, which is essential for the success of the project as a whole.

10- The tenth law - None of the 9 principles should be forgotten! If one of the principles is not respected, the whole project may be in jeopardy.

It's the superhero principle.

Each of the nine principles outlined above plays a crucial role in the success of the project. They are interconnected and reinforce each other to ensure an environment conducive to collaboration and the achievement of community objectives. So, if any one of these principles is neglected or ignored, it can have a damaging impact on the whole project.

For example, if the coordinator doesn't reduce critical tasks or promote opportunities, this can lead to an imbalance of responsibility and a lack of initiative. Similarly, if contributors feel they are managing too much, and feel they can't disengage from the project, this can lead to a lack of motivation and a drop in commitment.

It is therefore essential to take all the principles into account, and to ensure that they are respected throughout the project. Maintaining a constant focus on these nine principles increases the chances of buy-in to the project, and reduces the risk of dysfunction and disengagement.

The different types and levels of participation

This section presents two complementary approaches to the distribution, analysis and roles of participants in an Internet community. The first comes from web culture and information science, and the second from J.M. Cornu and is more applied to epistemic communities.

In information science, a community responds to the 90-9-1 principle[5], otherwise known as the 1% rule. The 90-9-1 principle is a model that describes the different levels of commitment in an online or Internet community. According to this principle, community members generally fall into three distinct groups:

1. Passive viewers (90%): This group represents the majority of community members. Passive viewers are those who primarily consume content created by others, but who do not participate in the community.

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[5] 1% rule: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%A8gle_du_1_%25

actively create or contribute content. They generally prefer to read, watch or listen without getting actively involved.

2. Occasional participants (9%): This group is made up of members who participate in the community on an occasional basis. They may comment and share content from time to time, but their level of involvement remains limited. They contribute sporadically, without investing a significant amount of time or energy in the community.

3. Active contributors (1%): This group is made up of a small minority of extremely active and committed members. They are the content creators and community drivers. These active contributors invest a great deal of time and effort in creating original content, answering questions, encouraging discussion and may even be project coordinators. They provide added value to the community.

The 90-9-1 principle highlights the inequality of participation and commitment within an online community. It indicates that only a fraction of members are actually responsible for community activity, while the majority of members merely observe and consume the content produced by the community. The 1% rule can be seen as a familiar rule of thumb in information science, similar to the Pareto principle[6] - which states that 20% of a group is responsible for 80% of its activity.

By understanding this principle, community managers can look for ways to encourage greater participation and promote a balance between different member typologies, taking into account the normality of the 90-9-1 principle. This can include efforts to involve passive spectators, encourage occasional participants to get more involved, and recruit new passive spectators. This means managing activity flows, community roles and recognizing/valuing community contributors at all levels.

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[6] Pareto principle: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principe_de_Pareto

With his experience adapted to epistemic communities, J.-M. Cornu represents and cuts more finely these types of participants as follows:

- Proactive: These correspond to the definition of active contributors. They represent between 1 and 5% of the community.
- Reactive: this group represents people who don't act spontaneously, but react when they're asked to (between 9 and 20%).
- Observers: this group represents those who follow the community and its exchanges. They read the content and exchanges carefully, but don't actively participate by adding information. They encourage the dissemination of information by relaying it within their network.
- Inactives: this group is made up of registered users who do not participate in or consult community exchanges.
- Non-members: these are people who are not necessarily aware of the community and who have not registered.

All types of members are interesting in a community. A community is cyclical: users leave, and others take their place. Among the observers, inactives and even non-members are the future pro-actives of tomorrow.

The different activities

Within the framework of a collaborative workgroup and online community, there are several key types of activity that contribute to its smooth running and to capturing the different types of participants presented above. These activities, described by Jean-Michel Cornu in his book "Le guide de l'animateur", are essential for keeping members engaged and fostering effective collaboration.

There are four of them:

- information f l o w : this activity enables you to receive information about the project (get informed)

- sharing space: this activity allows you to share and create content

- meeting (synchronous): this activity enables us to meet and make progress on the project.

- exchange between meetings: this activity allows you to communicate

First of all, a regular flow of information is essential to ensure that group members receive relevant information about the project they are interested in. This information flow can take various forms, such as updates, progress reports, important announcements or project-related news. Access to this information enables members to keep abreast of recent developments and stay involved.

Next, a sharing space is needed to enable group members to share and create content. This space can take the form of an online platform, a document management tool or a collaborative workspace. It enables members to share ideas, resources and documents, and to collaborate on specific projects. The exchange of knowledge and skills within this sharing space fosters innovation, creativity and collective problem-solving.

Synchronous encounters, such as face-to-face or online meetings or work sessions, also play a crucial role in a collaborative workgroup. These meetings enable members to get to know each other, discuss in real time, share ideas and make collective decisions. They promote group cohesion, strengthen bonds between members and enable faster progress towards project objectives. Synchronous meetings also provide a space for clarifying question marks, resolving conflicts and planning future actions.

Finally, exchanges between meetings are essential to maintain fluid and continuous communication within the collaborative workgroup. These exchanges can take various forms, such as online discussions, e-mail exchanges, instant messages or discussion forums. They enable members to share ideas, ask questions, provide updates and collaborate remotely. These exchanges between meetings help to keep members engaged, foster group cohesion and quickly resolve problems or challenges that may arise between synchronous meetings.

In short, the key activities for maintaining a collaborative work group include a regular flow of information, a sharing space to create and share content, synchronous meetings to meet and make progress on the project, and exchanges between meetings to facilitate ongoing communication. Implementing these activities fosters commitment, collaboration and production within the group, creating an environment conducive to the success of the collaborative project.

These types of activities are also important to accompany the different types of participants to the different stages of participation.

Screenshot of a figure from Guide de l'animateur, J.M. Cornu, éditions Fyp, 2016.

So, as summarized in this image, meeting activities enable reactive members to become proactive, discussions and exchanges accompany observers towards the status of reactive members, and information sharing and dissemination spaces help inactive members to consult the community's content and non-members to take an interest and perhaps join.

The different roles in a community

Organizing a community

In each community, we observe organizational typology mechanisms that are illustrated in the diagram below.
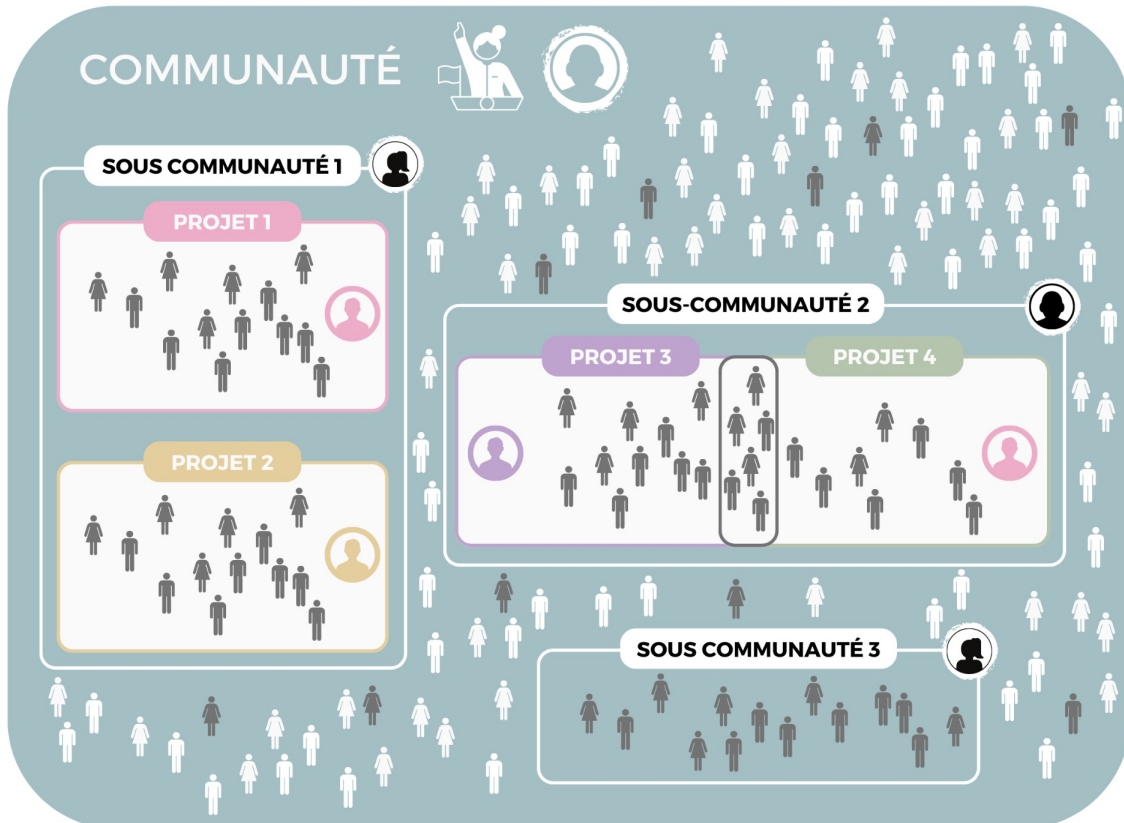

Schéma des rôles d'une communauté épistémique par Audrey Tocco - CC BY-SA (Tela Botanica)

This diagram shows the various sub-communities within the community, represented in three different ways. The first representation shows the grouping of two projects within a thematic sub-community. For example, in a community dedicated to adapting nature conservation to the challenges of climate change in Europe, there could be a sub-community specifically for mountainous natural areas. This sub-community could bring together two projects focusing on different European mountain ranges.

The second representation highlights a thematic sub-community made up of two closely related projects, in which some members are common. This suggests a partial interconnection of the members involved.

Finally, the third representation shows a thematic sub-community that doesn't necessarily follow a project structure. This sub-community can simply serve as a place for exchange and discussion around an object, without necessarily resulting in a concrete collaborative work.

Thus, these different representations illustrate the various ways in which thematic sub-communities can be organized within a community, offering opportunities for grouping based on specific projects, similarities between projects or simply common interests without a strict project framework.

The roles

The diagram above also illustrates the different roles that exist at community level, which are different from the roles within project groups.

At the top of the first diagram, we have the community leader. This person is responsible for representing the community and making its voice heard. He or she must be involved in the community's public life. In particular, the leader is responsible for presenting the community at meetings and symposia, responding to media interviews and fostering partnership relations.

Next to the leader is the community facilitator. This role acts as the privileged interface between members and sub-community facilitators. The Community Facilitator consults with the facilitators on a regular basis, and monitors progress on the various themes. He or she proposes solutions and takes care of the overall animation of the community.

The sub-community facilitator is responsible for organizing regular exchanges with the members of its various projects, in order to monitor their progress.

Project coordinators are, as their name suggests, responsible for coordinating their project.

Active and passive contributors can also be seen in the diagram. As mentioned above, the entire community is not actively involved in all aspects, and some members are passive contributors.

Feedback: the Natur'Adapt community

Preparatory work essential

The creation of the Natur'Adapt community has been a long and carefully planned process, with particular emphasis on the development of a specific platform to host this community. The initial aim of this platform was to cater primarily for members of the LIFE Natur'Adapt consortium, and to serve as a workplace for their respective activities.

At the start of the project, several actions were necessary to set up this platform. First of all, the Réserves Naturelles de France team had to be made aware of and trained in the principles of community animation. It was

It is essential that the project team is well-informed about best practices for animating an online epistemic community and creating an environment conducive to collaboration and engagement.

In parallel, workshops, three user surveys and exchanges were organized to gather the initial needs of potential users of the tool. These sessions enabled us to understand the expectations, objectives and functionalities desired by the members of the LIFE Natur'Adapt consortium. The results of these consultations served as a basis for defining the platform's target audience, and the ways in which the needs of primary users - the members of the consortium, and end-users - the future members of the community - could be accommodated and supported. Particular attention was also paid to anticipating the community in 5 years' time, bearing in mind that this public would not necessarily have the same expectations in functional terms between the start and end of the LIFE Natur'Adapt project.

Numerous exchanges and meetings also took place between the Réserves Naturelles de France team, Tela Botanica and the developers responsible for the platform's design and development. These discussions helped define the tool's technical and functional specifications, taking into account the requirements identified during the previous stages. Development was launched with the minimum functionalities required to make the platform rapidly accessible to the first users.

It's important to note that the development of the platform was an iterative process that took place over several years, adapting to the different phases of the LIFE Natur'Adapt project. User feedback, evolving needs and new desires were taken into account to continually improve the tool over time and according to available resources. This iterative approach ensures that user expectations are met and that the platform remains relevant and effective throughout the project.

The first test version of the platform was presented to consortium members at the first working seminar (06/2019). These members, being the first users of the platform, had the opportunity to discover its functionalities and provide initial feedback with a view to the platform's further development.

Gradual opening

In order to accompany the opening of the platform and gradually develop the Natur'Adapt community, preliminary work was carried out to target the community's various target audiences and their priorities in relation to the LIFE Natur'Adapt project. The aim was to adopt a personalized opening by concentric circles of audiences, enabling the community to be gradually enlarged and taking the time needed to set up specific actions adapted to each circle.

An important first step was to define the different target audiences, to understand their expectations and specific needs, and how the platform could be of interest to them. It was important to take into account the specificities of each group to better engage them and encourage them to join the Natur'Adapt community. This involved identifying the common interests, motivations and particular issues of each target audience.

Once these audiences had been identified, customized communications were put in place to reach them effectively. The aim was to create a message tailored to each group, highlighting the specific benefits of joining the community and participating actively. This personalized communication helped to attract the interest and attention of the different categories of audience, highlighting the benefits they could derive from participating in the Natur'Adapt community.

In parallel, specific actions or groups were designed for each audience typology to target their expectations and encourage them to get more involved. These actions were tailored to the interests and needs of each target audience, and aimed to provide them with appropriate content and features. For example, specific resources geared to their interests were created, and communications aimed at them were set up within the various events linked to the LIFE Natur'Adapt project.

The initial schedule planned to accompany the gradual opening of the platform was faced with major changes due to the impact of COVID-19. This situation necessitated a restructuring of activities, notably due to the cancellation of face-to-face events for many months. These events included the Réserves Naturelles de France congress in 2020, which was to mark the launch of communications to a wide audience.

However, in view of these constraints, alternative measures were put in place to compensate for the cancellation of face-to-face events. A web-based communications approach was favored. This included the use of newsletters from the Natur'Adapt project and project partners, as well as one-off webinars, followed by a monthly webinar cycle in 2021.These online communication channels enabled initial contact with community members to be maintained, and relevant information, news and resources to continue to be shared despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

Thanks to this multiplication of web communications, it was possible to gradually reach a wider audience and maintain the momentum of the Natur'Adapt community despite the global health crisis. Newsletters served as an effective means of informing members of project developments, new features on the platform which continued to develop in parallel, opportunities for participation and upcoming online events.

In terms of content, a regular and progressive input on the platform, in terms of content on the object bringing the community together, was essential to meet the expectations of the different target audiences. The aim was to feed each group with relevant information, resources and discussions in areas of interest to them. This approach kept members engaged and encouraged their active participation in the Natur'Adapt community.

In conclusion, support for the opening of the platform and the gradual development of the Natur'Adapt community have been achieved by implementing a targeted approach to audiences. This personalized approach, based on circles of audiences, enabled us to expand the community, create communications tailored to each group and implement specific actions to meet their expectations. Although the circumstances of the global health crisis necessitated significant adjustments to the initial planning, the efforts put in place enabled us to overcome the obstacles and maintain the momentum of the Natur'Adapt community in a virtual context. The continuous provision of relevant content on the platform has helped to maintain the interest and commitment of members, fostering the dynamic development of the Natur'Adapt community.

It is also important to note that during this opening period, the Réserves Naturelles de France project team received professional training from

Animacoop and Jean-Michel Cornu. This has enabled them to benefit from personalized, tailored support in running the Natur'Adapt community.

It's worth highlighting the recruitment of a trainee within the Réserves Naturelles de France team, whose internship was specifically focused on the animation of the Natur'Adapt community, and particularly on the functions of community facilitator. This new recruit played a pivotal role in establishing valuable links with community members, facilitating exchanges within groups, and thus paving the way for the community's greater openness.

She was able to devote her time to supporting members, helping them get to grips with the various tools and launching group monitoring. These actions fostered interaction between community members, encouraging exchanges of experience, discussion and collaboration via various media: webinars, videoconference meetings, email exchanges, etc. Through interviews and group facilitation actions, the intern helped to strengthen the commitment of participants and enriched exchanges within the Natur'Adapt community, while preparing for its gradual opening up.

One of the first steps in animating a community is to introduce yourself, so that the community can begin to create links:
You can find the member presentation discussion on the platform:
https://naturadapt.com/groups/communaute/discussions/dfacd2f0-ba73-48d9-b9cf-f61a4f9999f8

Actions for a dynamic community

The work of animating the Natur'Adapt community spanned several years, and was marked by a number of pre-defined stages. This part of the project involved recurring actions as well as flagship and new initiatives that contributed to strengthening the community.

Recurring actions animation

In 2021, an animation plan has been drawn up and regularly updated at the project's bi-monthly or monthly meetings until 2023. This animation plan, created in the form of a table, can be accessed via this link. It presents the various typical activities and one-off actions carried out, providing a clear, step-by-step vision of the community's operational animation.

Among the initiatives put in place, we would like to mention the regular summaries shared with the community, such as the "Light on your groups" and "Tips and tricks from the platform" exchanges. This information was circulated in a dedicated discussion on the community group, with the aim of informing members about community life and the launch of new groups likely to be of interest to them. Platform tips and tricks, on the other hand, were designed to provide technical explanations to facilitate the use of the tools made available, and consequently to facilitate community activity.

Platform tips and tricks" summaries:

https://naturadapt.com/groups/communaute/discussions/d2dcc6c7-72c4-461a-a491-18ff1814c2c6

Light on your groups" summary:

https://naturadapt.com/groups/communaute/discussions/67eb74a1-3057-49bf-9912-c5908a09d554

Since 2021, a specific animation action has been organized every spring within the Natur'Adapt community. This initiative aimed to encourage all members to take and share online a geolocated photograph of a plant in bud, in bloom, or any other stage of the plant phenological cycle.

The aim of this project was to create a geographical representation of the phenological cycle of plants within the community. By collecting geolocalized photographs taken by members, it was possible to observe the different stages of plant development in different regions.

This initiative was both fun and educational, enabling community members to share their common interest in nature and learn more about the geographical variations of the phenological cycle. By taking part in this action, members were able to contribute to a unique and collective visual representation.

o f plant evolution: collaborative production on t h e very object of the community.

News published about the above-mentioned photo animation (2021) :

https://naturadapt.com/groups/communaute/articles/l-instant-phenologique-de-la-com
municipality

structuring actions

Several structuring actions have been implemented, contributing to the community's development. Firstly, a Call for Expressions of Interest (AMI) was launched to recruit test sites for the Natur'Adapt adaptation approach. This initiative was hosted by a group created on the online platform, offering a dedicated space. This group brought together all relevant elements linked to the AMI and offered participants the opportunity to exchange information and questions. This approach fostered open and transparent communication, helping to reach a significant number of protected area applications, thus reaching the community's priority target audience. Selected winners then benefited from the guidance of the growing community, as well as ongoing support from the platform. The Natur'Adapt COOC (Corporate Online Open Course), entitled "Natur'Adapt, la formation", was a central training and support tool for the winners. Hosted and distributed to the test sites on the Tela Formation platform, the COOC was complementary in terms of tools to the Natur'Adapt platform: tracking the progress of participants, awarding grades, badges and attestations, etc. It will then be enhanced, transferred to the Natur'Adapt platform and made available to the test sites. It will then be improved, transferred to the French Office for Biodiversity platform, and finally re-distributed outside the Tela Formation platform to other managers (more information). It should be emphasized that protected area managers who were not selected as prizewinners were able to become actively involved in the community and benefit from minimal access to the Natur'Adapt adaptation process. At the end of the period during which the approach was tested by the selected sites, all the adaptation plans and vulnerability diagnoses of the various protected area management structures were shared and integrated into the platform's resources. This has created a rich and diversified knowledge base, accessible to all members of the community, whether winners or losers.

no. In this way, each contribution contributed to the platform and helped consolidate the available information.

Finally, one of our flagship actions has been to set up a cycle of regular webinars. Starting in 2021, a webinar on a specific aspect of climate change was organized every month. These webinars were designed to be a "rendez-vous" with members of the community, offering them an opportunity to get together virtually, exchange ideas and meet around the topic they were passionate about. They helped to create strong bonds between participants and foster collaboration within the community. These sessions also provided an opportunity to share the latest information, best practices and individual experiences, creating an environment conducive to learning and innovation. [A specific group on the platform](#) was created to gather all the information and archive the webinars, which can be viewed in replay on the Natur'Adapt YouTube account. The Natur'Adapt YouTube account is still active and serves as a support for occasional webinars.

In conclusion, these structuring actions have played a key role in developing and strengthening the community. The AMI has helped to mobilize protected area managers through effective use of the platform, and the monthly webinars have provided a regular meeting space, encouraging the exchange of ideas and strengthening links between members. Overall, these initiatives have created a strong, collaborative and committed community, while enriching the resources available on the platform.

Another essential structuring action to strengthen the community was the distribution of the Natur'Adapt MOOC: Acting in favor of nature in the face of climate change. This online course offered a unique opportunity to open up the community to the general public, enabling them to familiarize themselves with the issues involved in adapting to climate change in the field of nature management and to take action. At the end of the MOOC, course participants were invited to join the existing Natur'Adapt community. [A specific group](#) was created to facilitate their integration into the community. This enabled MOOC participants to continue to exchange ideas, share experiences and benefit from the support of other community members. By facilitating a smooth transition from the online course to the active community, this action strengthened the commitment of participants and helped broaden the scope of the community by welcoming new members who were motivated and interested in the subject.

These recurring actions and flagship initiatives have played an important role in animating the Natur'Adapt community. They have enabled us to maintain a regular and relevant flow of information within the community, encouraging members' commitment and their appropriation of the platform's tools and functionalities. Thanks to these initiatives, the community has been able to remain dynamic and benefit from an environment conducive to exchange and collaboration.

Maintain the momentum

It's worth stressing the importance of the process involved in building a new community. This process takes time, and does not necessarily follow the usual project management pattern. The Natur'Adapt community continues to take shape and grow stronger. Initially limited to members of the LIFE project consortium, the platform now boasts almost 1300 members (managers, partners and the general public). It is essential to nurture and maintain this growth in order to maintain the momentum of this enlightened community, aware of the challenges of climate change and its impacts on nature, particularly in protected areas. This community has become an epistemic one, where members share knowledge, exchange ideas and collaborate to find sustainable solutions. It is essential to find the human and financial resources to maintain this dynamic, and in particular to promote the commitment of current and new members, and to ensure the platform's wide and open accessibility.

A platform for the community

The platform was specifically developed to host the Natur'Adapt community. Its gradual development, together with the animation actions set up jointly, have gradually created a strong central core of the community.

Key features of the platform

The Natur'Adapt platform, accessible at https://naturadapt.com, comprises several scales: a community scale, a group scale and a personal scale. These scales are visible in several key areas:

- Platform & community space

  [The platform](#) [features](#) several navigation menus, a cross-functional search engine, a member map and directory, and privileged access to community group content.

  The community area: to facilitate navigation and offer a consistent user experience, a "general" group called "Community" gives access to all Natur'Adapt community members' tools, while maintaining the same user experience and functionalities as the other project groups. All registered members are de facto members of the general "Community" group. Content pages created in the group are used on the platform. This gives direct access [to resources, notably organized on a pearltree](#), to [news](#) and [to members](#).
  A map of community members enables you to locate members' localities at a glance, and a filter search enables you to refine your search.

  Link to the Community group: https:[//naturadapt.com/groups/communaute](#)

- A project group space: workspaces with features for sharing, editing, searching, directory and map views of members.

  Link to the community groups page: https:[//naturadapt.com/groups/](#)

- Personal space (profile, dashboard): contains the member's personal information, which can be consulted and modified.

The Natur'Adapt platform is made up of these different areas, and is structured around the concept of "groups".

Each group has a number of functions (web and email discussion area, file sharing, news area, page editing, cross-project content search, project member visualization including map view).

Any Internet user can create an account and join the platform. They sign up for the platform's Community group, and can then choose to join specific groups, which may be dedicated to specific projects.

Groups can have two statuses: public or private. If a group is public, then any user can join it and use the services it offers: writing articles and pages, starting discussions, uploading files and consulting members' profiles. It is also important to note that any Internet user (person not logged on to the site) can consult articles, pages and discussions, and can download uploaded files. They may not, however, modify or create content, and, for reasons of privacy, have no access to members' profiles or the information they display.

If a group is private, none of its information (apart from presentation and avatar) is visible to anyone not logged in. A user (logged-in person) can request to join the group by sending a group registration request. This request is subject to acceptance by the group's administrators, who can either refuse or accept it, thus enabling the user to access the group's information and participate.

Any user can create a project group, which is subject to moderation, with community administrators deciding whether or not to validate the new group.

The platform has been designed and created to facilitate participation. So as not to hinder participation, all users and group members are able to participate in all types of content (discussions, page or news writing, document submission). We have opted for an a posteriori moderation system so as not to hinder participation. Administrators can therefore delete any content created that is not appropriate.

One of the difficulties with participation is the fear of taking action. Few people dare to take part, even in tasks requiring little investment. So it's essential not to add any further obstacles. The only functionalities that benefit from a priori moderation are, as mentioned above, the request to create a new group and the request to subscribe to a private group.

Features to animate the community

To draw a parallel with the key activities of a community (seen in part 1 of this guide), the following functionalities have been developed or implemented on the naturadapt.com platform:

- an information flow, enabling you to receive information about the project (get informed)
  - group news, newsletter, platform website
- a sharing space, for sharing and creating content
  - Group members all have write access and can create pages and articles. A document repository has also been developed to allow community-created resources to be deposited.
- (synchronous) meetings, to meet and make progress on the project
  - use of a zoom account to enable groups to hold remote meetings, creation of webinars and discussion forums
- exchanges between meetings, enabling communication :
  - A discussion forum where all members of your group can exchange views by e-mail or directly on the site.

It's also important to note that the Natur'Adapt platform adopts open licenses for all its content and applications, in line with the values of sharing and fairness at all levels. The content of the Natur'Adapt platform is made available under a [Creative Commons CC BY-SA (4.0)](#) license. The site code is [licensed under the GPL (3.0)](#) and is available [on GitHub](#).

[Legal information](#)
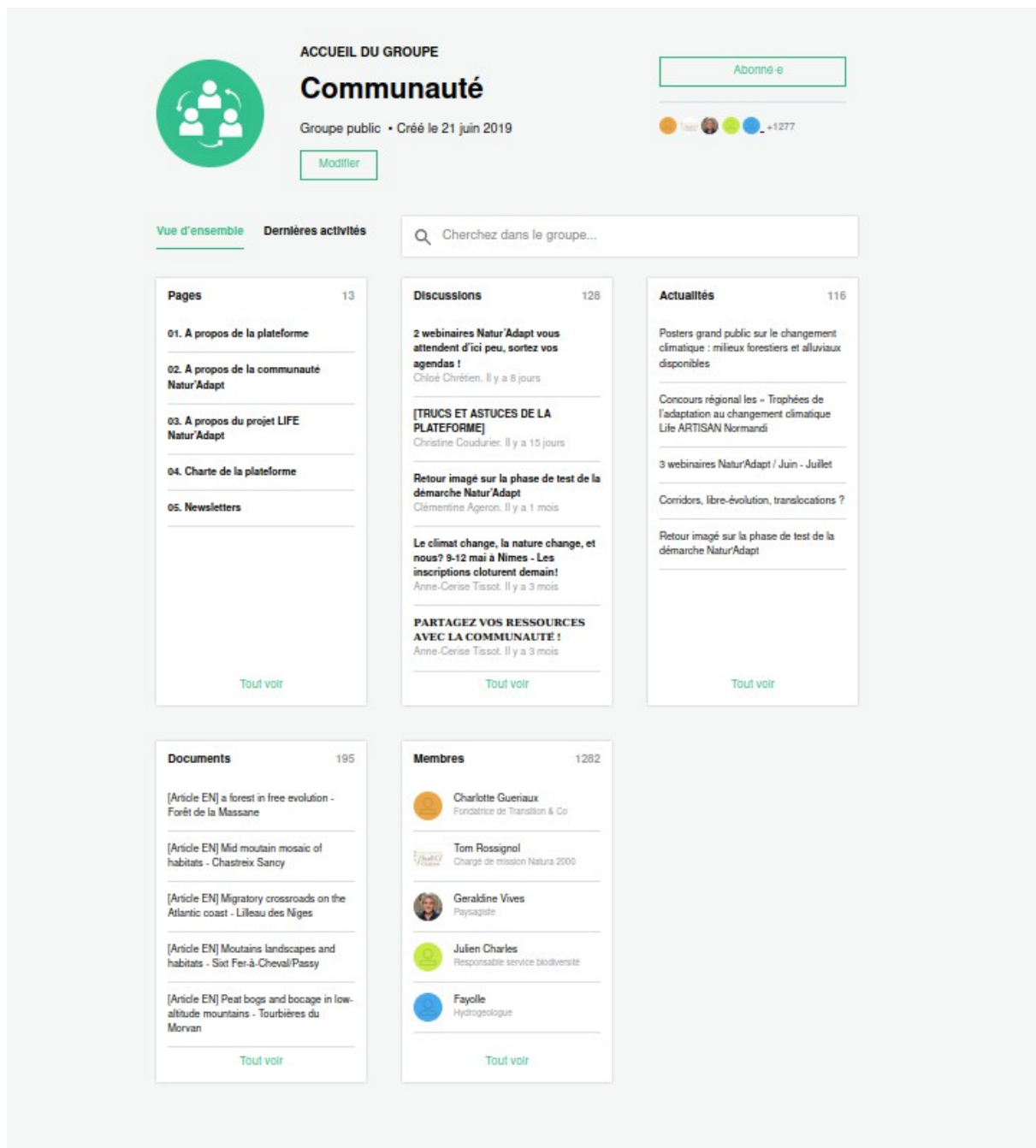
Screenshot of the "Community" group view, showing quick access to different services: pages, discussions, news, documents and members - naturadapt.com

Conclusion and outlook

The experience of building the Natur'Adapt community has been extremely rewarding, and the results are very encouraging.
Initially reserved exclusively for the Life project consortium to exchange ideas and work on adapting protected area management practices to climate change, the community was later extended to professionals in the field. Finally, it opened up to the general public, offering different points of view on climate change, its impact on nature and video advice on what to do, even on an individual basis.

Beyond the importance of the subject on which it is built, one of the major strengths was the creation of a technical support fully adapted to the practices and key concepts of community animation. Indeed, the possibility of developing a specifically adapted tool proved particularly interesting. The development process was iterative, allowing us to adapt to the main needs expressed according to the resources available.

The key principles and lessons learned from the training courses were applied to the community development actions. The involvement of the Réserves Naturelles de France team in the discovery, understanding and implementation of new concepts and tools has proved extremely positive.

The technical management of the platform, including the associated code and services, has been fully transferred to the Réserves Naturelles de France team in 2023.
At the end of the project's five years, the community continues to grow and its audience to evolve. It is essential to continue to monitor this evolution closely. Future surveys could be carried out to better understand users' needs and wishes, and to ensure that the tool (the platform) remains in tune with their expectations.

It's important to ensure that the tool continues to evolve, but it's equally important to maintain regular animation actions. This includes monitoring key activities. In the future, it would be interesting to have more animation time to better follow members and propose activities in line with their expectations. This would enable the community to grow stronger

and to move from an attentive phase to a more collaborative one, where she herself carries out the projects.

Community dynamics need to be nurtured and encouraged. It is important to continue fostering exchanges, active participation and the development of collaborations within the community. By maintaining ongoing support and adapting actions to members' needs, the community can continue to grow and flourish.

In the next few years, both the running of the community and the maintenance of the platform should be financed via the LIFE Biodiv'France project run by the OFB, of which RNF is an associate beneficiary.

Summary

One of the main thrusts of the LIFE Natur'Adapt project has been devoted to developing and leading a community around the adaptation of the management of natural areas to climate change, in particular via an online platform: naturadapt.com

In order to achieve this, several actions were carried out in parallel: the design of an adapted web platform, the sharing of community animation methods and knowledge of the key activities and concepts of cooperation within collaborative projects, notably based on the works of J.-M. Cornu and the experience of the Tela Botanica association.

Among the concepts explained in this guide are the different laws of collaboration according to J.M. Cornu, as well as the roles and different types of participants. It's important to note that to ensure the smooth running of an online collaborative community and support community members towards engagement, it's essential to put in place a number of key activities:

- First of all, a regular information flow enables members to receive updates on the project,
- Secondly, a sharing space facilitates the creation and sharing of content b e t w e e n members,
- Synchronous encounters, such as meetings, enable real-time exchanges and collective decision-making,
- Last but not least, the exchange of information between meetings ensures smooth, ongoing communication.

These activities are essential for keeping members engaged, fostering collaboration and supporting different types of participants towards more active participation.

The Natur'Adapt community has been built up over the years of the LIFE Natur'Adapt project, with recurring activities such as highlighting different groups and sharing tips on how to use the tool. An annual animation is organized each year, inviting members to share geolocalized photographs of plants at different stages of their phenological cycle.

Structuring actions have forged the community, such as the setting up of a monthly webinar cycle, support for the project's protected areas and the creation of teaching teams for t h e creation and dissemination of training courses (a COOC for professionals and a MOOC for the general public), which have also invited learners to join the community.

Thanks to the iterative development of the web tool, the Natur'Adapt platform has been able to adapt to the different needs and types of audience brought together. Indeed, the Natur'Adapt community has evolved over time, from a limited number of users to the members of the project consortium, to a gradual opening up to professionals, and finally to the general public, thanks to the creation of various adapted resources and actions.

The experience of building the Natur'Adapt community has been enriching, with its growth and gradual opening to the general public. The creation of an epistemic community is a work to be anchored in time, and it would be beneficial to continue to maintain its dynamics so that the community continues to grow.

naturadapt.com

The LIFE Natur'Adapt project aims to integrate the challenges of climate change into the management of European protected natural areas. Coordinated by Réserves Naturelles de France, it is based on a collective learning process over 5 years (2018-2023), around three axes:

- The development of operational tools and methods for managers of natural areas, in particular to diagnose vulnerability to climate change and draw up an adaptation plan;

- The development and animation of a transdisciplinary community around natural spaces and climate change;

- Activating all the levers (institutional, financial, awareness-raising, etc.) needed to implement adaptation in practice.

The various tools and methods were tested on six of the project's partner reserves, then reviewed and tested on 15 other sites before being rolled out on a national and European scale.

Coordinateur du projet

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Partenaires engagés dans le projet

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Asters Conservatoire d'espaces naturels Haute-Savoie — Réserves Naturelles CATALANES — Parc naturel régional Morvan — Parc naturel régional des Volcans d'Auvergne — Petite Camargue Alsacienne

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