SMARTA
smart rural transport areas

REZOPOUCE

ORGANIZING MODERN HITCH-HIKING

Country: France

OVERVIEW

Short description of the Good Practice Case:

RezoPouce is a successful modern hitch-hiking service. Thanks to modern information technology and a simple registration procedure it avoids the drawbacks of classic hitch-hiking, i.e. a subjective feeling of unsafety and uncertainty, and reinforces the advantages of it, i.e. that it is a rapid, convenient and extremely cheap means of transport.

50% of users wait less than 5 minutes! 90% less than 10 minutes!

The organisation behind the service uses furthermore an innovative governance model: a cooperative society with collective interest (SCIC)
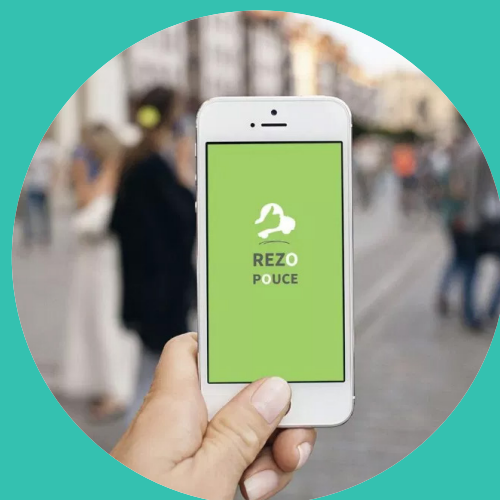

Figure 1. Rezopouce hitchhiking app
(source: DNG Agency)

Main aspect/issue addressed by the good practice

- The extremely high cost of public transport in rural areas
- The lack of mobility for people without a car in rural areas
- The (subjective) feeling of unsafety and uncertainty of classic hitch-hiking
- The lack of knowledge in nearly all rural municipalities of setting up a modern hitchhiking service and of new technologies is addressed by:
  - a performant communication technology that makes hitch-hiking a safe, comfortable, rapid and convenient means of transport; and
  - an organisation that supports municipalities to set up the service. This organisation is organised as a cooperative society with collective interest (SCIC) has a progressive governance style

Main objectives of the good practice

- To provide a simple, reliable, comfortable means of transport
- To make rural areas accessible for all people not having access to a car
- To reduce the underutilisation of cars (*autosolism*)
- To make hitchhiking a normal and accepted means of transport
- To secure hitchhiking by registering users and by choosing right stops
- To contribute to more sustainable mobility behaviour
- To complete and valorise the public transport offer
- To create links between inhabitants

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

Region	Target area	Population	Population density
Rural regions all over France covering between 10 and 20% of rural France	All rural areas in France	22 million inhabitants in the target area (not covered entirely today	No precise data available

Other

Today, Rezopouce is deployed in 1305 municipalities, counting 2 million inhabitants. The low density and very low density areas in France account for 22 million inhabitants. By the end of 2018, Rezopouce should be present in 2.000 municipalities.

Target user groups and needs

- In 2009, the service was created for young people and for journeys under 20 km for which traditional carpooling platforms could not be used. However, the target group evolved to all users not having a car at their disposal, from it the under 18 (with a parental authorisation). Today all ages between 16 and 74 are represented among the members with overrepresentations of younger people between 30 and 60.

Men and women are equally represented. RezoPouce is used for all kinds of trips, but mainly for daily activities. Some people use it for a part of their commuting trip to reach a railway station or a bus stop.

- Target groups and users can also be different from town to town as each town decides who to focus on.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Timeframe(s)

- In 2009, RezoPouce was created by 10 municipalities, including one grouping of municipalities (Le Grand Montauban), North of Toulouse. It was an alternative to the instauration of a municipal bus service that failed in the early 2000.
- In 2012, these municipalities created an association. Each municipality deploying the service became part of the association.
- In June 2013, 80 municipalities deploy RezoPouce services and 2 employees manage the service supporting activities
- End 2018, the RezoPouce service will be deployed in 2000 municipalities, covering 20% of rural France. New services are also developed.
- It is also deployed in more peri-urban regions (the mobility organising authority (AOM) of Toulouse) and in collaboration with highway operators and PT operators

- With the LOM law (loi d'orientation sur les mobilités to be voted in early 2019), a further expansion of the service is expected as AOM will be able to organise mobility (car pooling, hitchhiking, cycling,….) without public transport.

Bodies involved

- The service is organised by the municipality with the support of the RezoPouce association, which has the technical, technological, communication and operational knowhow that it shares with the adhering municipalities.
- In most cases, local stakeholders are involved to ease reaching the potential users and drivers.
- Allthough financing needs are extremely limited, other bodies provide some ressources (see below)

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Mobility services provided/addressed

- Users and drivers need to provide ID card, a photo and to validate a charter of good behavior. They get a smart card and a mobility kit. The mobility kit contains: a sticker to put on their cars window; destination cards (to show destination when hitch-hiking); a manual; and a list of hitch-hike points.
- Users of the service simply go to the determined hitchhike places and wait for their driver. By using the application users can see how the driver that accepted their request is approaching. It reduces the subjective waiting time. The idea is that drivers and users are part of a community that provide services between one another.
- The *"operators"* are people using their car providing a service to other people just for the sake and pleasure of providing a service for other people and the planet.They endorse a mutual aid logic. Most of the users are registered both as drivers and passengers.

Transport. Municipalities organise the RezoPouce service however under other competences like: economic development (companies need workers), preservation of nature and climate, youth, social inclusion, etc.

- There are no particular procurement and contracting rules. Municipalities need of course to respect all rules when installing the hitchhike stops (traffic laws for example).
- The future legal framework (Mobility Law that should be voted early 2019) should ease services like RezoPouce.

Cost and Financing sources

- The operational association budget is 400.000 EUR. The money comes from the municipalities, the central State, Europe (European Structural funds, Leader, etc.), foundations and companies. The public transport company TransDev is a sponsor of RezoPouce.

Photo from Parc Chartreuse
http://www.parc-chartreuse.net/en-juillet-parraine-un-pouce/

Legal Framework

- There is no real legal framework and rural municipalities always find a way to implement the service as long as they are motivated towards it. One could argue that the municipality needs the *"mobility"* competence to organise this mobility service and is therefore obliged to organse an AOM (Mobility Organising Agency) and expensive Public

- The municipality pays RezoPouce for the services it offers. The amount depends on the number of inhabitants.
- The municipality also pays an employee who informs and helps (potential) users. For a small locality this is in total only a few hours per week.
- There are no financial revenues of the service as it is completely free for users.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
OF THE PRACTICE

Organizational set-up

- The first thing in setting up a RezoPouce service is the municipality deciding to provide the service to its inhabitants.
- The RezoPouce association provides the necessary know how. Municipality and RezoPouce decide where to locate the hitch-hiking spots in order to guarantee that people have their spot close to their place (+- one spot every 400 m in town). Important location criteria are: presence of a frequently-used road; an area safe for people to wait and for drivers to stop their car and pick up people; and having a residential zone nearby.
- RezoPouce trains one or more municipal employees to enable the municipality to organise the registrations, communication, animation, etc. Communication and animation are crucial.
- The association is organised as a cooperative society with a collective interest (SCIC) representing other associations, (groupings of) municipalities, companies, RezoPouce employees and users. The association has a General Assembly where these groups are represented. (Groupings of) municipalities are asked whether they want to become a member when they start implementing the service.

Supporting technologies

The supporting technologies:
- Enable the identification of all drivers and users when subscribing
- Provide a peformant travel information system including an application (since end of 2017)
  - ° To visualise all hitchhiking spots
  - ° To register all journey demands and offers and make those visible to drivers and users. No trip reservation is organised.
  - ° Localize drivers and visualise the drivers position
    - – *With the application the passenger sees his driver on the map and can estimate his waiting time. His waiting time is not reduced, but the uncertainty about the waiting time is taken away. He knows his driver arrives, even if he needs to wait 10 minutes.*
  - ° Provide all kind of statistics about the service (number of trips, kilometers done, waiting times, the most popular journeys,…
    - – *First statistics are expected by early 2019*
  - ° Note that **an application is not necessary to organise hitchhiking**. The service functioned very well since 2012, while the app was introduced end of 2017.

Photo from parc-gatinais-francais.fr
http://www.parc-gatinais-francais.fr/rezo-pouce-ca-roule/

- RezoPouce is a kind of a facilitator for a community-based system. Hitchhiking is community based, but the hitchhiking framework, the communication and animation strategy, etc. is offered by the association.

The main advantage of the application is that it allows to attract youngsters, provide a 21st century image and get statistics about the service.

INNOVATION ASPECTS

ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

The partnership between the know-how providing association, RezoPouce, and municipalities is interesting.

Further partnerships with public transport (PT) operators and (PT) managers is interesting to increase the societal value of the PT system.

LEVEL OF PUBLIC SECTOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The service provides a good mobility service with a very low budget, creating high value for public money

INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN SHARED AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

Partnerships between regular PT services and ReziPouce are organised at several places to improve PT performance (ex. Macs in *"les Landes"*)

ICT CONNECTIONS AND IMPACTS OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS IMPLEMENTED

Technology helps in making the classic hitch-hiking safe and secure and contribute to its succes. The RezoPouce app, introduced in 2017, makes waiting time shorter in a subjective way, it also provides a more trendy image to the service, however, the service can be perfectly used without an app. This shows the Rezopouce associations commitment not to increase the digital societal split! To some extent, the app can also provide the wrong image that the car that will pick you up is still far away, while a non registred car could also pick you up.

OTHER
(e.g. SOCIAL INNOVATION, etc.)

The governance of the association is interesting. It does not look for a profit maximizing business model for car pooling, but instead for maximal value for local communities and the needs of people and society. It provides people the opportunity to discover that hitchhiking is the perfect way to see the goodness of mankind!

ASSESSMENT

Ridership and other key metrics/results (through key-indicators, where applicable)

- Today: 3.043 stops on a territory of 1.305 municipalities 2.000.000 inhabitants. 2.000 municipalities are expected by end 2018, covering 20% of rural France.
- Registered users:
  - 50% drivers and passengers – 25% only drivers, 25% only passengers
  - +-50% women – 50% man
  - Youngsters and other persons without access to mobility
- The degree of penetration among population is 1 or 2% in the year of the introduction of the service with an average 1% increase the following years. Penetration rates depend strongly on communication efforts to raise awareness among drivers and to recruit users.

- This good practice is easy to be transferred as long as there are some motivated people believing in the potential of hitchhiking. The communication and animation effort is very important.
- The network expects to further extend to other municipalities and develop new services depending on potential user and municipality demands. Today a "*reseau seniors*" (for the elderly) and a service adapted for commuters are under development. The commuter service would be based on an advanced planning of the journeys and an agreement between user and driver in advance.
- Stops have also been installed in extremely rural areas with very limited car passage. In spite of doubts on the possibilities of success, the waiting times remain acceptable as drivers realise that hitchhikers have not much chance to be taken, if they do not take them.

Photo from urbanattitude.fr
https://urbanattitude.fr/rezo-pouce-developpee-et-securise-le-auto-stop/#prettyPhoto/0/

- For each official registered driver, 6 other drivers also take hitchhikers at the stop. A kind of natural solidarity can awake. People can write on their hitchhiking card names of small localities or use abbreviations only locals know and that creates a collusion with the (local) driver.
- Average waiting time: 6 min; 50% less than 5 min, 90% less than 10 min.
- In early 2019, more detailed figures will become available thanks to the use of new software

- The spirit of the RezoPouce service and association is well described in the sentence: RezoPouce organised hitchhiking enables people to rediscover the goodness of mankind!

Good Governance

- This GP involves an interesting business concept. It puts society, solidarity, sustainability and customer satisfaction before any consideration of profit-

ASSESSMENT

making and is very open to innovations leading to those objectives.

- The contribution of effective marketing, communication, coaching, etc. is crucial. The RezoPouce hitchhiking service is marketed as something innovative and trendy. The availability of the app is important therefore (while the service works also very good without the app). Furthermore, lots of early adoptors of RezoPouce are real ambassadors of the service and discuss it with drivers, family and friends.
- The service implies real community engagement as the service is offered by the local community members.
- The associations structure is a SCIC, cooperative society of public interest, and is part of the social and solidarity economy. All members of the cooperative can participate in decisions via the COPI (piloting commitee and working groups). Each trimester, the COPI meets and discusses potential new developments during a lunch discussion. Members living far away participate via video or teleconferencing. This is a guarantee that ideas from the bottom are taken up. There was for example the idea of having a stop in a small village part of a national park with nearly no cars passing by. Following "*normal*" hitchhike stop rules, these places would not have been chosen. Reality showed that the chance for being taken by a car driver were high there, since drivers realised that there were nearly no drivers passing by there. Waiting times remained higher than average of course.

Success factors/strengths

- Communication to attract users and get a positive snowball effect is the main success factor. The RezoPouce association worked together with a professional communication agency to improve its different tools in the first year of the service.
  - Remark that critical mass is necessary for the application. With the vintage version critical mass of subscribers is less important, as much drivers, not officially registered, take passengers.

- Guidance of the registered users to help them attain a change in their mobility behaviour is also essential. Mobility ambassadors meet potential users at all kinds of events and help new users to change their behaviour.
- Good coordination with the other offers of local mobility, especially for the provision of last mile connectivity.
- A regular critical revision of the hitch-hiking stops to make sure the stops grab still the maximum potential. In the first years, decisions on the hitchhiking stops had too much been taken based on the town or municipality rather than on the larger living areas.
- Provide subjective and objective security for users. People can only register when showing their ID card and when using the service, the passenger can always send a message with the driver's number plate to the RezoPouce call centre.
- Be sure to get the necessary feedback from the different experiences and transmit permanently the knowhow to improve the service continuously.

Difficulties encountered/weakness

- The main difficulty is to overcome negative prejudices about hitchhiking, especially those from political decision makers. Most of the time, people with a negative prejudice will not adopt the service, at least in the early stages.

FEATURES THAT ARE CONSIDERED TO BE GOOD PRACTICE
(LESSON(S) LEARNT)

Adapt a basic cost-effective good idea to an attractive service for today.

Provide people the opportunity to provide a service to other people.

Pay attention on communication and coaching towards behavioural change.

Look how technology can take away today barriers for use.

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER DETAILS

Contact of the operator and of relevant stakeholders

Organization: RezoPouce
Person contact: Bénédicte Rozes (coordinatrice)
Email / Mobile: b.rozes@rezopouce.fr
0033 6 25 72 96 81

Organization: RezoPouce
Person contact: Alain Jean
Email / Mobile:
Organization: a.jean@rezopouce.fr

Key references

- Cerema, le plan de mobilité rurale, élaboration, mise en oeuvre et évaluation, Annexes – Recueil de pratiques, juin 2016

Websites

- www.rezopouce.fr