



DIGITAL ALPS CONFERENCE Digitalisation of the labour market

Bringing academic resources for socio-economic development where there is no university

Towards the “cloud university”? The connected campus experimentation

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Obviously, innovation and initiative abilities are as critical for rural area as for metropolis

- ➔ These abilities are widely linked to acquisition and use of new knowledge and competences...
- ➔ i.e. to the access to education and notably to high level training and scientific expertise...
- ➔ mainly produced and delivered by the universities

But, for different reasons (broadening, research intensification and/or specialization, international concurrency...), universities are more and more concentrated inside metropolis, so...

- ➔ It is then quite easy for metropolitan socio-economic stakeholders to access to the diverse “immaterial” academic resources (i.e. that do not necessarily require physical installation)
- ➔ ... but also easier and less expensive for urban young people to afford academic education...
- ➔ ... and also to find then a job locally

Consequently, rural area, and especially in mountainous area appear to be both geographically and “sociologically” distant from the academic sphere, thus...

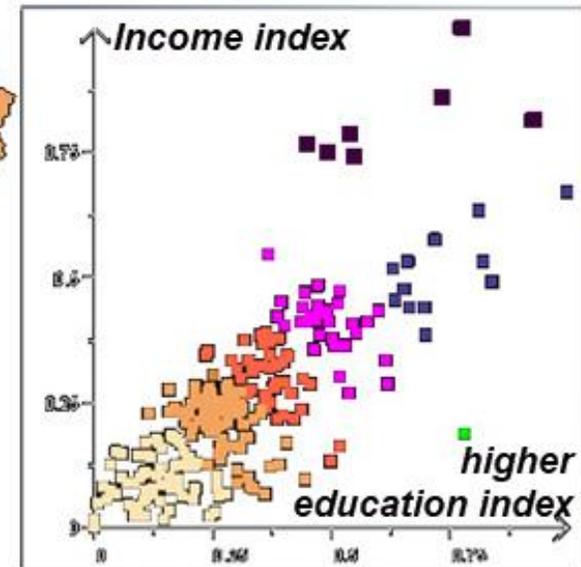
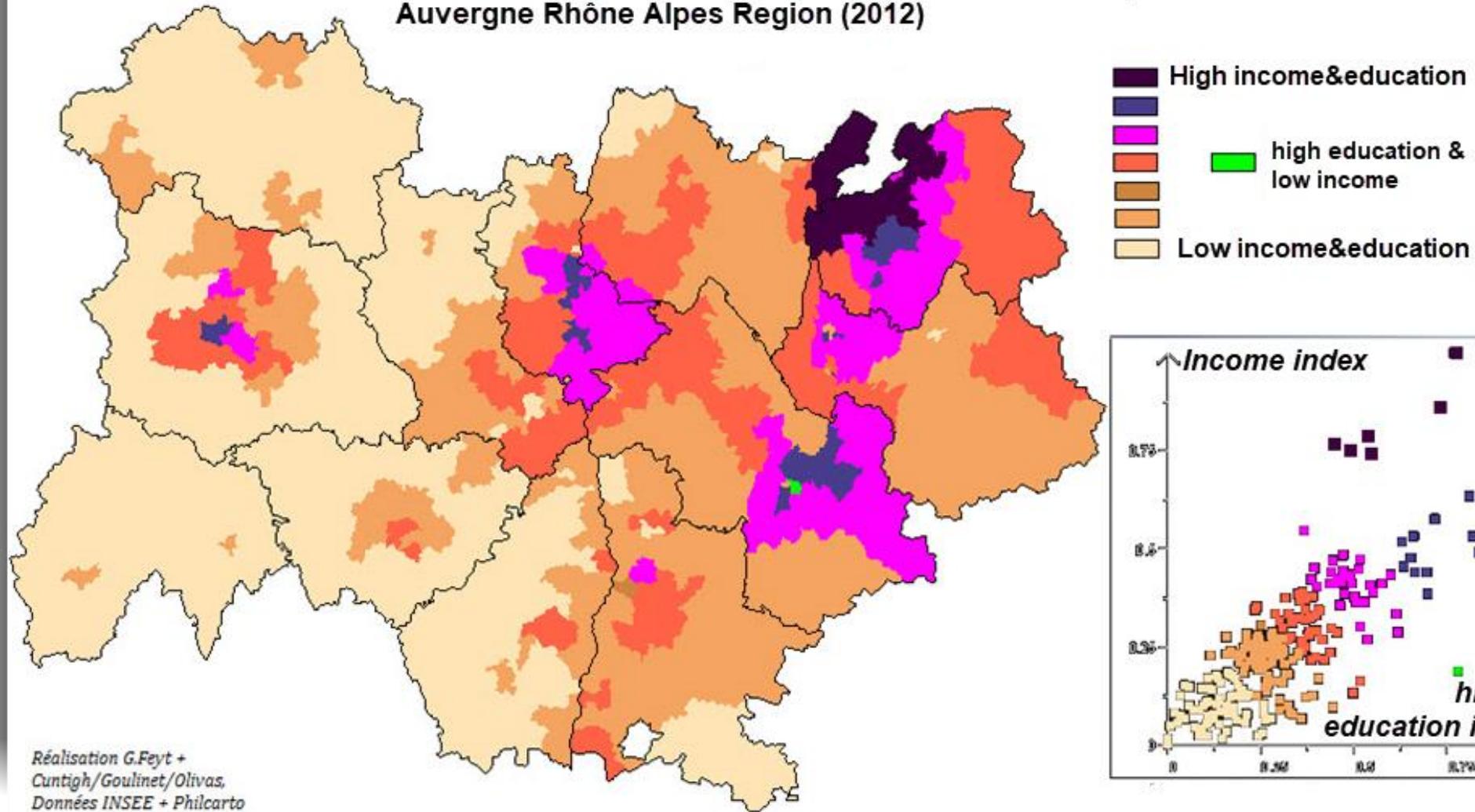
- ➔ Young rural people have a lower training level : *in 2019 in France, 77% of the “bacheliers” (high school grade) go to university, but 40% of them coming from rural area give up on pursuing studies*
- ➔ They have to move away if they want to get an academic training...
- ➔ ... and they often do not return, having built their new personal and professional life elsewhere

But also...

Socio-economic stakeholders have no or a little practice and knowledge of academic resources and mechanisms

- ➔ They do not establish or integrate the necessary relationships, networks, practices...
- ➔ They have difficulties to attract or to keep young graduates, and even more students looking for an internship, while they nowadays often have increasing recruitment requirements
- ➔ They have very little opportunity to collaborate with and even simply to meet researchers in their domain.

Link between income and higher education level (and vice versa...) Auvergne Rhône Alpes Region (2012)



Some “immaterial” academic resources (non-definitive and -exhaustive inventory)

Training

Internship offer

Distance learning

Continuing education

Validation of job experience

...

Research & Innovation

Research contract

Scientific expertise

PhD with a company

Access to scientific hardware

...

Documentation & information

Access to scientific online libraries

Access to scientific data bases

Access to online conferences

...

... and all the new resources that digital is creating or going to create

The overall issue is then

“How to bring academic resources where there is no university... and where there probably may never be?”

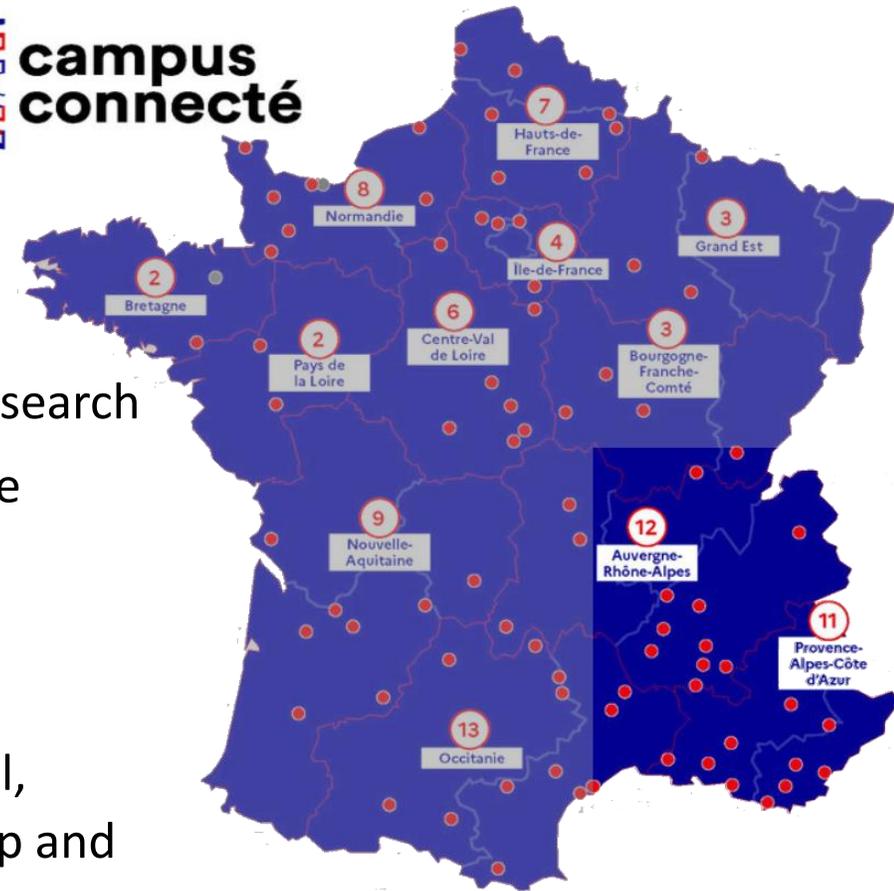
And the specific question for today

“How digitalization can or could allow distant territories (geographically and sociologically) to benefit from academic resources for supporting their economic and demographic development or stability?”

Specific context elements

- For years, universities have produced online courses in the context of **MOOC** development, but experience shows that present **results are reserved** (an international research group estimates that the proportion of people completing a MOOC is between 5% and 10%).
 - Nevertheless, the COVID19 pandemic and the **confinement** have literally **boosted the production of online courses** (obviously in a hurried and disorganized manner) and created **new habits even needs**.
 - Public or private ***third places*** (coworking places) **are multiplying and spreading**, even in small villages, opened to both students, workers, unemployed persons...
- ➔ This actually creates **new conditions for** experimenting what could be called “**cloud university**” at the service of skills development and of employability in and for the “non-metropolitan” territories
- ➔ That is the explicit but also potential challenge of the ***connected campus project***

- ❑ 89 connected campus certified, many of them in mountainous area
- ❑ 25 M€ from the French State + material and financial
- ❑ Grenoble Alps University in charge of 5 connected campus



Initiated and granted by the French ministry of Higher Education and Research
Principle is a cooperation between the ministry, a local authority and the *university of proximity* in order to **create and animate a place with workstations and the help of a dedicated coach.**

The basic aim is to **propose to neo-high school graduates (“bacheliers”)** **prevented** from going to an academic city for different reasons (financial, health related, familial...) **a physical and human framework** for taking up and succeeding the first level of higher education...

consisting in :

- a third place equipped with workstations
- a mentoring also responsible for the respect of collective and individual rules
- the support by the “university of proximity” for distant library, orientation, social assistance...

In fact, it appears that, instead of struggling young *bacheliers*, **the first and main voluntaries** are young adults engaged in a **continuing training** process with a **determined professional project**. They are thus taking distance courses, often at master level, proposed by very diverse and distant universities.

→ **Connected campus** appear then, not as an help for a first step towards academic training, but as **an opportunity to aim a career development while staying** in the rural place or the small town in **where one have or want to live**.

It is then **coherent to conceive connected campus** more generally as **generic points of entry towards the whole immaterial or “digitalisable” academic resources, for individuals** willing to get a initial or life long formation, **but also for companies** interested in cooperation with university for lifelong group training, help for trainee search, expertise, research contract...

→ For developing this **“cloud university”** at the local level, the **necessary coaches** must thus be informed and **formed about the diverse academic** resources and the way and conditions of access, so that they could both **promote** the resources and **relay** the needs.

Experimentation of connected campus is indeed beginning (considering the COVID pandemic constraints). During the two next years we are going to **evaluate impacts of this “academic extension”** on professional trajectories of **individuals**, and on the development strategy of **local companies** in terms of skills and innovation.

General considerations and openings

For decades, before digital generalization, the only perspective for a small city willing to get some academic resources consisted in trying to entice (and finance) its *university of proximity* for setting up generic or at contrary very specialized training. In practice, the university was often not as enthusiastic as the local authorities. And the process was complicated, expensive and often uncertain.

Digital clearly change things :

- **No more to choose between a generic training** –not directly useful in terms of local labour market –, **and a very specialized training** –risky at middle or long term, depending on economic changes.
- **No more to invest in expensive and not necessarily durable heavy equipment.**
- Permit to **reconcile lifelong training and local but also distance work**
- **No more dependent** on the orientations and choices **of the university of proximity...**
- Thanks to a **multiplication of potential academic partners**
- Permit to **benefit of the very new academic resources** as soon as they appears, and even to initiate new resources
- Permit **small companies** to engage and implement a **R&D strategy**, even modest...
- ... thanks to a **progressive upgrading** (from internship to research contract)
- ...

But... digital is not a miraculous product

In a **shared interest service** such as the connected campus, the framework **no more consists in a couple “provider/user”** or “need/offer”. It is in fact a more complicated system associating **several “collective operators”** (university, local authorities, organized socio-economic stakeholders...) with their own purposes and constraints. But that have to find the way and the means for converging towards common interests.

- ❑ **Academic institutions** that **have to accept and assume the notion of *territorial responsibility*** as they have already done regarding their “social responsibility” (both responsibilities are not to be assimilated). Universities have to conceive digital and remote learning no more as a tool in a framework of international attractiveness, but also as a means for making their wide regional hinterland benefit from their “immaterial” resources. Indeed some part of their hinterland can be at least as “far” as an Japanese academic partner.
- ❑ **Local authorities –even rural – have more and more to considered academic resources** –related to training as well to research and innovation- **as a strategic tool for their social and economic development**, even if they have no academic implantation on their territory. They have to be informed and formed on what one can wait (or not) from universities, and become an intermediate between their socio-economic stakeholders and the academic entities.

- ❑ **The very diverse socio-economic stakeholders have to be conscious that they can and may have benefit to develop cooperation with academic institutions**, even if they do not have the relational networks or habits, and that for, with the help of their local authorities, in particular in terms of digital infrastructure and support.
- ❑ **Individuals** (students, workers, unemployed persons...), **wherever they live, have to be conscious that they are legitimate to aim at a high level formation** (initial or lifelong) and that digital can help them to overcome or reduce obstacles and disadvantages.

Thus, *digital for territorial development is first of all an object and an issue of collaboration* between directly or indirectly involved stakeholders with very diverse nature and status. Actually, that is not the minor virtue of the digital.