

The future of the welfare state: paths of social policy innovation between constraints and opportunities

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Adjusting social policies to their beneficiaries: paradoxes and limits. The case of social policies of housing in France

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Abstract

Since the 1980s, the drive towards individualisation of social policies has led to the emergence of a new group of housing policies in France – the integration through housing policies.

These policies are analysed in this paper through two different schemes – local housing solidarity funds and social residences – which are designed to help underprivileged people get access to housing and be better integrated in society.

The argument presented here aims at showing that these policies are stuck in several double binds: the process of deregulation versus the will of equal treatment; adjusting social policies to meet the specific needs of their recipients while avoiding stigmatising them, and helping the most underprivileged in conjunction with pressures to deliver welfare services in a more efficient manner.

Answers to these double binds are set at different levels. Integration policies officers tend to recreate categories of beneficiaries while the non-profit housing agencies that implement these policies build self-evaluation criteria, select recipients and develop relationships with the social housing sector. However these agencies appear very fragile in the face of fund-giver pressures, which may weaken the general coherence of their action.

Introduction: Recent trends in French contemporaries social policies

For about twenty years, French social policies have given more and more importance to considering their beneficiaries as individuals who have to be or to get autonomous and responsible. This evolution is particularly clear with the “*Revenu Minimum d'Insertion*” (RMI) – minimal income for integration – and then in policies which came close to “activation policies” which tend to link social policies and employment policies: reforms of unemployment compensation, recent creation of the “Active solidarity income” and so on.

Pierre Rosanvallon put in evidence these evolutions in a book which emphasizes the under-thoughts of these reforms. He denounces the bureaucratic structures of a “passive Welfare state”. As the first surveys had difficulties to describe the new forms of poverty, Rosanvallon concludes that exclusion is somehow socially opaque. As “in terms of long term unemployment and exclusion, there are only [...] specific situations”, he argues for a social protection which would give adjusted answers toward individual singularities “beyond the traditional standardized procedures”¹ (Rosanvallon, 1995, 11). So far the new integration policies launched in the late 80's – RMI, Youth relief funds, Housing solidarity funds, plans against over-indebtedness - share common features: emphasis on an active Welfare state, decentralization, flexibility and attention to the “projects” of individuals with whom the relationship is formalized in a “contract”.

This paper aims to show these evolutions within the special case of French social policies of housing. Above all, we have to underline here the distinction we make between “social housing

1 We translated all the quotations by ourselves.

policy” and “social policies of housing”. We will further explain it in detail, but to make it simple: the social housing policy consists in building and providing ordinary social housing, whereas social policies of housing are composed of different schemes (temporary housing, social accompaniment...) specifically designed to help underprivileged people to access to housing and to be better integrated in the society. We will also call these social policies of housing “integration through housing policies” since their shape is close to other integration policies.

Our hypothesis is that the frictions between trends toward individualisation of social policies, will for equality of treatment and scarcity of available “goods” (Jon Elster, 1992) result in various double binds. We will analyse the consequences of these double binds for the organizations that implement these policies and provide support to their beneficiaries.

This paper is divided into four parts. The first part explains the history of French social housing policy, in order to understand the role assigned to the policy of integration through housing and the transformations this policy involved. We also describe there our specific fields of research. The second part deals with the three double binds we identified: process of deregulation versus will of equal treatment, adjusting social policies to their recipients but avoiding stigmatising them, help to the most underprivileged in contradiction with pressure to get more efficiency. The third part details several ways of solving these double binds: a recategorization of public policies’ targets, the proposal of self-evaluation criteria by the housing charities², the selection of the recipients and the development of closer relationships between specific housing suppliers and ordinary housing suppliers. Finally, our last part evokes the limits of the solutions adopted to cope with these double binds.

1. The integration through housing sector: towards individualized and adapted social services

The social policies of housing in France are very specific to the national frame. That is why we will first describe how they emerged and what they consist in. These policies have emerged as a response to the social crisis since the early 1980’s, situated at the junction of social action – dedicated to the poorest – and social housing policy – dedicated to the working class and key workers families. A new sector has therefore been emerging and developing: the “integration through housing” sector, also called “very social sector”, with its own actors and norms (Lévy-Vroelant and Reinprecht, 2008).

1.1. Emergence and development of the integration through housing sector

a) Social housing in France: contextual elements

Before focusing on social policies of housing, let’s have a brief overview at the social housing sector in France. In 2004, the social rented sector represented around 17% of the country’s housing stock, which places France in an intermediate position compared to other European countries (Lévy-Vroelant and Tutin, 2007). Despite a recent government will to promote the selling of social housing units to their dwellers, France has not undergone the massive movement of privatization

2 We choose here to translate the French word “*association*” into “charity”. The “*association*” status is ruled by a law dating from 1901. It includes a large spectrum of possible organisations, from the small local philatelic “*association*” with a few volunteers to the gigantic “*association*” with a thousand of employees, or even state-launched “*association*” ensuring quasi-public service. The only thing they all have in common is that they are non-profit organisations. The charities we study here are often with no volunteers but the board, who legally must be a volunteer.

that other European countries have been through.

In France, social housing providers are divided into two main groups: public agencies (public bodies funded by local authorities) and social firms for housing (private but non-profit firms). These two different types of social housing providers are ruled by the same laws and they both contract with the state, which give them access to specific subsidies and financing to build social housing. Social housing providers can get conventioned loans from a public bank (*Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations*). Rents are determined by the state, at a national level. There are income ceilings for households applying for a social housing unit, and the allocation of social housing is decided by “allocation boards” which members are social housing providers, local authorities, social workers... Today, needs for social housing in France are far from being satisfied. In 2007, more than 1.2 million of households were applying for social housing units, but only 427 000 could get one (Fondation Abbé Pierre, 2009, p.129).

Besides the ordinary social housing stock, the “very social” sector, dedicated to poor or “underprivileged” people, has largely developed. “This sector encompasses several forms of provision; the things they have in common include the mode of access (regulated by social workers and conditioned on need) and restricted rights for tenants” (Lévy-Vroelant and Tutin, 2007, p.81). Most of the time, the tenure consists in a temporary contract instead of a normal lease. Since there is no specific census at a national level, it is very difficult to know exactly how many units are concerned. They are said to be over 150 000 (Fondation Abbé Pierre, 2009,123). The social policies of housing include the production and allocation of these very social housing units, but also specific allowances for underprivileged households. The amount of public subsidy and the number of supported households is not negligible, but all together the social policies of housing represent only a small part of the public spending for housing: to roughly put it into numbers, in 2008, the allowances for the most underprivileged represented 375 million Euros on a total amount of 35 billion Euros (Fondation Abbé Pierre, 2009, 172).

b) The 1977 reform in the housing field: from construction subsidies to personal subsidies

To understand the origins of the integration through housing sector, it is necessary to come back shortly to the history of social housing in France³. It dates back to the late 19th century when philanthropists and entrepreneurs started building housing to accommodate workers and employees. But it is mainly after World War II that the state intervention really starts developing: a massive production system of social housing is introduced at the beginning of the 1950s. Social Housing is, at that time, devised to respond to low-wage workers’ housing needs and not only to the needs of the poorest – who have historically been housed thanks to private initiative (commercial sector and charities). The main tool of this policy is a specific financing: construction subsidies conceived to stimulate the building effort in the after-war France, a time of reconstruction, industrialization and urbanization.

This system of stimulating construction still somehow exists today but it underwent a main reform in 1977: the shift from construction subsidies to personal subsidies. This reform is based on the idea that the housing quantitative shortage was solved at that time. The aim is to improve the quality of the housing stock, to target the public spending toward the people most in need and to help households have upward housing careers (especially to gain access to home ownership). The “personal housing benefit” (*aide personnelle au logement*) is created: it is an allowance directly given to households in order to help them pay their rent. The 1977 reform is based on the faith in economic progress: households would leave unhealthy private housing to enter a social housing unit, thus getting housing benefit. And later they would be able to buy their own house thanks to the

3 These three first paragraphs are inspired by the works of Jean-Claude Driant (Driant, 2003).

better standard of living linked to economic growth.

But the analysis made by the 1977 reformers is denied in the 1980s. In fact, it is the end of economic growth. Massive unemployment appears and the inadequacy between housing supply and housing needs is getting obvious. Housing prices increase faster than households' incomes. Housing careers and residential mobility are slowed down. The state is spending more and more on distributing housing benefit. From that moment, the housing issue is little by little analyzed as a problem for the underprivileged to access housing. These difficulties cannot be solved by what has become the principal way of regulation in the housing sector – that is to say the housing benefit.

Social policies of housing appear at that moment: “The emergence of the “very social” sector is linked to a global tendency towards less stable labour relationships. (...) “Very social” housing therefore is aimed at housing as well as incorporating those people excluded from or marginalised in the labour market” (Lévy-Vroelant and Reinprecht, 2008, 210). The field of the housing policies gets wider: previously focused on housing, they will progressively try to take into account precariousness and exclusion. That is why the integration through housing sector comes from the meeting of two historically distinct fields: social housing policy – which targeted low wages workers – and social action – which until then was in charge of sheltering populations seen as out of the society, outcasts who needed a social intervention, not just housing.

c) Institutionalisation of local initiatives: creation of a new field of public policy

As mentioned just before, the integration through housing sector starts developing in the 1980s, at the beginning thanks to charities. As there is no legislative frame at that time, the associative initiatives devise tools. They develop two orientations in particular: facilitating access to housing and diversifying the forms of housing supply for the underprivileged (sublets, special leases, conventions with private and social landlords). Associations and local authorities, with the support of the state, start the first special funds in favour of the access to housing or the non eviction of threatened tenants. However these initiatives based on volunteers remain limited.

The Besson Act – 31st of May 1990 – aims to implement housing right for all and gives a legislative frame to these first experimentations. It also gives them a national scale: it requires local authorities (départements⁴) to develop schemes for people in need of housing and to create “housing solidarity funds” (*Fonds Solidarité Logement*) to help the poor in case of non payment of rent and to cover moving in expenses or rental deposits. This fund also finances a social counselling linked to housing (*accompagnement social lié au logement*). In 1994-1995, the perspective of helping the underprivileged to access ordinary social housing is completed by the production of several kinds of “very social” housing, situated somewhere between shelters and standard housing. In particular, *social residences* are created: they are supposed to be temporary housing (tenants should stay for two years maximum), helping the tenants to move on to ordinary social housing thanks to support from social services. They “aim at comforting integration, integration viewed both as the process by which someone can get a house and as the offer of the house which will enable the people to integrate themselves” (Bonnet, 2006).

Later, the Act against all forms of exclusion in 1998 sets new rules for the prevention of evictions and priority access for certain households to social housing. Recently, the Second Decentralisation Law (Law on local liberties and responsibilities – 13th of August 2004) leads to the decentralisation of the housing solidarity fund to local authorities. Finally, the social policies of housing are based on the participation of associations which run the programs, social landlords who build and offer housing, administrations and local authorities which are in charge of coordinating these programs

4 *Département* is a French local authority, with a territory larger than the municipality and smaller than the « *région* ». There are 100 *départements*, including four overseas *départements*. They have from 70 000 to 2,5 million inhabitants.

and distributing public subsidies.

d) New actors specialized in the integration through housing sector

As we have just seen it, the search for new solutions for housing poor people went through local experimentation before being institutionalised and organised by the state. This new field of public policy results from an evolution in the way people responsible for housing and social services used to work.

As far as social housing is concerned, the organisms historically created to build housing for workers have been more and more solicited to take in charge the social question and the growing precariousness, thus confusing the identities of these very organisms. The job of social landlords has changed since the 1980s with the hiring of social workers.

As far as social intervention is concerned, some associations have taken part to the blurring of the frontier between sheltering and housing. These associations have increased their influence, their legitimacy and their competences. It is particularly true with housing and social reintegration centres. A complete sector has developed with associations and civic organisations specialized in integration through housing. These associations play the part of a mediator between the landlord and the tenant. Their mission is to make certain population get in contact with a housing supply which would be inaccessible to them without the intervention of a third person. Some associations side more with the demanders, providing them support and counselling. Others side more with the housing suppliers: they participate in the diversification of housing supply by producing and running temporary housing programs, or by running ordinary social housing in a specific way (for instance they are financially responsible for the tenant, they take the lease in their name for a certain period, etc.)⁵.

After having explained French social policies of housing, we want now to make clearer how wider trend of individualization in social policies influence them.

1.2. Individualisation in the social policies of housing

a) Underprivileged people: a flexible category

The integration through housing sector is based on a new way of qualifying social demand: it aims at helping “underprivileged people”. The introduction of this category is linked to the evolutions of the socio-economic context and to representations of poverty. Indeed, the 1980s witness the rise of what is then called new poverty, and later exclusion. It is no longer a matter of poverty but precariousness, fragility and insecurity. The main issue remains the employment, but it is no longer looked at as a question of hierarchy between socio-economic statuses as in the 1960s: it is now perceived through the distinction between stable job, precarious job, or even unemployment (Ballain and Maurel, 2002). The definition of the “underprivileged people” in the Besson Act is voluntarily not delimited – they are any person or family experiencing particular difficulties to get access to or to stay in a dwelling, mainly because of inadequate income or living conditions.

The targeted population is then defined referring to the situations of the households, and not according to administrative and stable categories. The economic dimension is present but the expression “living conditions” does allow taking into account other special elements (family or professional or health problems for example). Thus the housing policy of the underprivileged tends to analyze individual situations in order to bring them an adapted answer.

5 On this new kind of charities, see (Ballain, 2001).

b) Promoting a responsible and autonomous individual

Integration policies aim to recreate social ties by and around the people and to make them get closer to employment. Speaking about temporary housing programs, Lucie Bonnet shows that “if it undoubtedly deals with getting access to housing, it also deals with getting access to a dwelling which enables a person to maintain or build ties through which they will get integrated in the society” (Bonnet, 2006).

Consequently, these policies and programs lay the stress on the recipients who are asked to commit themselves and find incentive. Having plans, even very small ones, is perceived as the main way to get integrated (Castel 1999, 762-63). “*Housing is not enough* could be the new slogan of housing policy. [...] New logic and new modalities are taking place, in which norms are personal responsibility and merit versus collective solidarity and rights. This is for instance obvious in the contract the resident has to subscribe – and that implies personal commitment to search for a job – when entering a social residence” (Lévy-Vroelant and Reinprecht, 2008, 215).

In the housing field, integration policies stress on the notion of housing career. The tenure of integration through housing programs is most often temporary. When getting out of the program, the household is supposed to have evolved and become more autonomous. The end of a successful housing career would lead to acceding to an ordinary dwelling (in the social housing or the private sector), as well as meeting the fundamental demands from the landlords: regular payment of the rent, respect of neighbourhood quietness and proper maintenance of the house.

To sum it up, we want to underline that the integration through housing sector insist on the ability of the individual to make plans and to show they are committed to their own professional and social integration. Moreover, housing is considered as a tool to make beneficiaries get a better integrated way of life but not as a response to a fundamental need (Bertrand, 2008).

1.3. Fields of research and methodology: two viewing points on the integration through housing sector

Louis Bertrand realized, within a PhD research on integration through housing policies, a qualitative survey in four French *département*. In each *department* he observed fund's attribution boards and interviewed several organisms' agents: services of the Housing Solidarity Fund, social services, social housing structures, charities and other administration services linked with housing policies. The research is then exclusively interested in the institutions, while the recipients are absent.

Hélène Béguin is researching the transformation of old and dilapidated migrant workers hostels (called “*foyers*”) – housing built from the 1950s to the 1970s to provide temporary accommodation for migrant workers – into social residences – a form of temporary accommodation created in the mid-1990s for the underprivileged. Social residences are part of the integration through housing schemes, as explained before. This transformation shows the link between the development of the integration through housing sector and the evolution of the labour market since the end of the 1970s. The survey is based on the analysis of three main kinds of data: laws and regulations; interviews of national and local workers from institutional bodies and organizations which own and/or manage “*foyers*” and social residences; ethnographic observation of professional meetings gathering these actors (especially within the professional federation of the organisms managing “*foyers*” and social residences, which gives a good insight of their strategy at a national level).

Confronting the observations made in those two fields of research allows us to bring forward hypotheses about integration through housing policies. In the following part we will first show that these policies are taken in contradictory injunctions that we will identify. Then taking into account

our surveys on the people who implement these policies, we will show in the third part how they tend to solve, cope with or do with these double binds.

2.Policies stuck in double binds

The social policies of housing reveal difficulties inherent to the principles on which they lie and to the context in which they are implemented. The frictions between the will of individualizing social service, the wish of guarantying equal treatment and the scarcity of the available resources implicate a series of double binds. In other words, the actors of the integration through housing sector have to answer contradictory objectives:

- process of deregulation versus will of equal treatment;
- adapting social policies versus avoiding stigmatization;
- assistance versus activation and efficiency.

2.1.Process of deregulation versus will of equal treatment

As mentioned before, the social policies of housing are being implemented in a partnership-based and decentralised frame. They are above all supported by charities which sign contracts with the state and the local authorities. “They are characterized by intensive local networking between key local, both private (charities, NGOs, etc.) and public (municipality, region, State)” (Lévy-Vroelant and Reinprecht, 2008, p.216). The decentralisation of public policy and the subcontracting with charities is supposed to bring more flexibility and a better adequacy to the local needs and realities, contrary to the traditional public policies which are decided on a national scale and thus supposedly more rigid. This is where the double bind appears: the norms and rules set on a national scale are weakened in favor of new rules set at a local level. But at the same time the will of equal treatment in the implementation of public policies remains strong.

Thus the trend to normalize associations’ work and interventions which has developed since the Act against all forms of exclusion in 1998 can appear as an attempt to solve this contradiction. In a context of rationalisation of public expenses, subcontracting the implementation of public policies goes with compensations which tend to normalize and control the subcontracted intervention. The actors of integration through housing are now submitted to agreements and specific requirements if they want to get funds. Very symptomatically, a local administration of social services in the Parisian area made a bid in order to decide which charities would receive the specific subsidy created to help organisms running social residences – the “social housing management subsidy” (*Aide à la Gestion Locative et Sociale*, AGLS). Launched in 2000, this AGLS was initially conceived as a set subsidy given to any organism in charge of a social residence asking for it.

As far as assessment is concerned, the Act “renovating social and medico-social action” – January 2nd 2002 – definitely shows the link between adaptation of social policies and their assessment. This act aims to give the recipient a central place (promotion of their rights, adaptation to individual needs...) and it introduces a four-level assessment:

- continuous evaluation of social needs;
- assessment of the conducted policies mainly through organization diagrams;
- assessment of the structures and services;
- evaluation of individual needs as a basis for an individualized project.

At the same time, a lot of charities get involved in processes of certification, internal audit, etc. The sector is now using tools which were devised outside the charities (accountant rules, management, quality norms, risk evaluation...) and that requires time and skills to transpose.

2.2. Adapting social policies versus avoiding stigmatization

Social housing policies aim at giving their recipients access to ordinary dwellings. The integration through housing sector finds its origin in the fact that this access to ordinary dwellings is difficult for some households – for those households the programs are intended to bring an adapted and individualized response. According to the people met during our surveys, this response is said to be in adequacy with the way of living of people, their income, the size of their families, their professional situation, their health situation, etc.

In reality, what does the adaptation consist in? Here two different things, which are not exclusive one to the other, are at stake:

- a social counselling, that is to say social workers assist and monitor the households more or less tightly, which very often goes with less tenure security than in ordinary social housing⁶;
- an “adapted dwelling”, that is to say a dwelling whose characteristics⁷ are different from those of ordinary social housing.

Then comes the double bind: on the one hand, aiming to be adapted to the personal situations of the recipients, integration through housing policies lead to setting derogatory and specific programs. But on the other hand, they also aim at avoiding stigmatizing the recipients. Entering derogatory programs is seen as a potential handicap which has to be avoided. Social residences illustrate this point. They are part of what social landlords call “adapted social housing”. But, at the same time, when a social residence is built, the local stakeholders (local authorities, social landlord, charities...) want it not to be easily identified – the more anonymous the better.

2.3. Assistance versus activation and efficiency

Charities specialized in the integration through housing sector provide support to those for whom traditional welfare does not work anymore. Offering them housing, charities provide them assistance. But at the same time, charities also ask them to get involved in their personal “integration career” (*parcours d’insertion*), in some logic of activation.

The context of rationalization and optimization of public expenses create a double bind: charities have to support the most underprivileged and the most “disaffiliated”, but they also have to be efficient. These charities working in the integration through housing sector are partly assessed on their proficiency to make their recipients get out of their programs – and enter an ordinary dwelling. The turnover rate becomes an evaluation criterion. As a result, charities are led to take charge of those who are able to get integrated and who show a willing to do so – that is to say those who are not the most underprivileged among the underprivileged.

3. Which answers to double-binds?

As Howard Becker noticed, people survive what seems to be insurmountable contradictions. They find practical answers to aporia (Becker, 1998). It is also true for the double binds we identified. In this third part, we will explain four types of answers we could observe: creating new categories of beneficiaries, elaborating auto-evaluation criteria, selecting recipients and networking with ordinary landlords.

6 For example tenants sign temporary contracts instead of ordinary leases.

7 For instance: bungalows for homeless people with dogs, collective housing with apartments and shared spaces (kitchen, activity room) dedicated to community life, special areas for travellers, etc.

3.1. Recategorizations: creating new categories of beneficiaries

In the model of social insurance, categorising determines the eligibility of the beneficiaries and the welfare they are eligible to. To take into account individual characteristics, integration policies strongly questioned these administrative categorizations. After the Besson Act, “former channels and segmentations faded and there are no more objective criteria for distinguishing social housing from all the different forms of temporary housing that have multiplied since the early 1990s” (Ballain and Maurel, 2002, 47). National rules are voluntary poorly operational, with unclear designation of the recipients. It is a shift in the way social policies apprehend the society. The old partition that created an outcast population identified through their handicaps next to a working and well integrated in social and professional solidarity population was no longer relevant. The labelling of the demand is to be made from the representations of local agents. For Ballain and Maurel, each agent interprets the rules and has his own look on concrete cases which can no longer be categorized (*ibid*). But this assertion should be discussed. Categorizing phenomena can still be observed, in a particular frame.

Why is categorizing still necessary? The available tools are not infinite on a given territory, and their adaptability is more or less limited. They are a predefined frame for the possible answers to the demands. Furthermore, categorizing is somehow needed to maintain an equal treatment within cases considered as similar⁸. Categories also have a technical role to ensure a better efficiency of treatment. Reinventing *sui generis* solutions for each case would cost in time, energy and efficiency. As we will describe it, they also work as a cognitive tool to understand the demands.

This necessity to categorize, which is not new, did not disappear after the individualisation process. It takes a new shape in the “problematic”. We will explain this indigenous term with extracts from two interviews we made of the director of a charity and her right hand. The director's collaborator gives a first hint:

Ms Deville: The ethic is to say: we are not here to do things instead of the families. We are neither here to put them in a solution we defined before, thinking that we had already deciphered these families' problematic. No.

What interests us here is the expression “decipher their problematic”. The *problematic* is a matter of knowledge: it aims to decipher, to cut out situations on which the institutional action can hitch. These hitching points are the *problematic*. This deciphering, as for any process of categorization, is in fact re-encoding into intelligible categories for the institutions. Once established, stabilised in a public policy, *problematic* becomes a cognitive tool.

How are these *problematics* built within the frame of individualized social policies? Before turning into a *problematic*, private problems have to reach public concern and to gain a collective dimension. The charity's director enlightens this process as she explains the beginning of the integration through housing policies in her department:

Ms Elvise: [At that time the question was:] How to recognize, how to manage to measure the social problematics at the level of the “*département*”? By creating a relief fund. Thus they opened a relief fund with several principles: a great flexibility, no specifically designed recipient, a flexible procedure... Many kinds of institutions could bring situations, and the answering work was of course to give a money answer, but also was to spot, to index, to identify the problems, so that one year later the *département* could make decisions about the great [local] problematics.

The construction of the *problematic* is here made clear. The starting fund is very large, not affected to a particular *problematic*. The treatment of cases gives birth to an expertise work, from identifying the problems to making decisions. The next step is to set up specific devices:

Ms. Elvise: The aim was: “We set up systems, we are conscious that they are certainly not sufficient, but now we are trying to see if they are answering the problematics we recognized”.

8 Acknowledgement of the similarity of the *situation* is based on a double tool: by-laws and allocation commissions.

The *problematics* are recognized, the “systems” that give them structure are set up. The cognitive dimension remains important. The experimental attribute is emphasized: the *problematic* is still fragile, subject of evaluations and redefinitions. This way of taking in account *problematics* is bound to a specific organisation, which Ms Elvisse sums up:

Ms.Elvisse: The idea then was to say: “We have an assistance service that is an observatory which identifies problematics. From these problematics we are trying to raise axis of a social policy. This social policy needs to experiment solutions. Building a new service is a heavy and complicated work. We need something more flexible, that allows experimenting actions, which could be evaluated on a short-term, after one year. If it works, it works: let's see how to develop it and if a charity is the adequate level of management. If it doesn't work: we stop and we try something else, it's easy and so on.”

The *problematic* comes both from a cognitive process and from a particular organisation (to identify *problematics* and their treatment). Once established it becomes a tool to better understand the cases, through a deciphering-recoding mechanism. The choice for more or less stable organisation implies that the definition of the problematic is more or less labile. This specific way of categorizing meets the expectations of the individualisation process and of the double-binds it involved, specifically between individualisation and equity of treatment.

Let's come now to a response from the charities to the double-bind between deregulation process and normalization of practices: elaborating self-evaluation criteria.

3.2. *Elaborating self-evaluation criteria*

Facing the trend to standardization, some charities have to negotiate the normalization criteria. They can choose to make the first move and themselves propose the norms that will apply. This director of the professional federation of organisms managing migrant workers hostels and social residences considers it is a professional responsibility to promote good practices and produce forms of self-evaluation:

M.Cadoussal: “Our role for me is to normalize in a sense of a collective that wonders about the aims it has, about what it is doing, and that tries to give sense to things that are each time specific. Things are knit locally. That's why I insist on professionalism and norm. [...] Tenure contracts and inner rules should be normed, a good practice should be defined on a professional referential... [...] When I say that I normalize, I am conscious of not normalizing at all because everyone messes around anyway: these tinkering, these artefacts, this ever-changing construction is one of our features”.

This extract particularly insists on a difficult balance between the importance of a local “tinkering” and the affirmation of a professionalism embodied in a common norm. It obviously recalls the double bind between flexibility and standardization. This double-bind is embedded in the charities’ practices. Aware of the difficulty, they can themselves suggest their own solutions.

The leitmotiv of “professionalization” becomes then one of the terms characterizing the relationship with the administrations. The latter ask the charities to “professionalize”, whereas the charities show their professionalism, recruiting certified social workers, and also building national norms (referentials or labels created by national federations).

At another level, one can observe with some charities that the strategy of self-evaluation and efficiency can lead to making the very recipient bear these requirements. This vanguard stage of individualisation is quite clear in the following interview extract with Ms Elvisse. She enthusiastically explains that the relationship with the recipients should be based on reciprocity, rather than crushing them unilaterally under an aid they cannot give back. Let's see how she explains the “shifting lease” (*bail glissant*)⁹ to candidates:

9 The charity is the official tenant and it subleases to a recipient, with a counselling if needed. After some time the lease “shifts” to the occupant who becomes an ordinary tenant.

Ms.Elvisse: What I say to the people who come to us is: "Ok, the gift we are giving you is confidence. It's a precious gift because in your present situation, nobody would offer it to you. But you will emancipate from this confidence, because we will prove together that the lessor was wrong not to trust you, and we will measure it next year when we will shift the lease. And once you convinced the lessors, not only will you help yourself, but you will help the charity and our action. Becoming a tenant, you help someone else to enter [the shifting lease program]. Leaving the shift lease, you are in this solidarity chain in which you give back to someone else the favour you were made. And because it will work, because you will be a good tenant, this lessor will be convinced and will continue to help. And that rests on you, on your shoulders. It is not on the charity. We are just a communication knot, but you are working, you are helping the others."

The intention is generous and this frame certainly efficient. However, transferring the responsibility weight on the recipient is not without the threat of making defaulting recipients feel guilty. This new responsibility could also enforce the mechanisms of selecting the recipients, another way of solving the double bind we want to explain now.

3.3. Selection of the recipient

The result of the double bind between activation and assistance doesn't benefit the most in-need people. The pressure of bookkeeping constraints and efficiency indicators (occupation rates and exit rates towards ordinary housing) implies selecting the candidates according to their capacity to get out of the service. To fulfil their mission, the charity picks out the most "motivated", those who are in a "proactive state of mind", in a word those who seem to be more "integratable".

A "study and development manager" of a social residence organism explains this approach:

Mrs.Finel: "If we effectively make sure that people are very dynamic in seeking a flat, a job and so on... even if it takes one year, two years, two years and a half, well they will find a flat. [...] We consider that social residence is a chance for our residents, because we will give them all the means to reinforce, to relieve at first [...] but reminding them they have to be proactive, they have to really... give it out ! We tell them "We are here to help you, we will develop relationships with lessors, with local authorities [...], but anyway it's temporary. Because behind there is... a bunch of others. [...] The decisive criterion is to really have the will to integrate".

On the contrary she describes a captive population that will overstep the temporary nature of the social residence:

Mrs.Finel: "The people who stay for more than two years will often have the same profiles: getting the RMI [minimal income for integration], alcohol addiction, formerly homeless people, people suffering from family clashes, people who somehow cumulate all possible difficulties, so two years, three years later they are still here".

So these great constraints lead to selecting the recipients, disadvantaging the most in-need people. It constructs a segmentation of the potential recipients, stuck between high boundaries – level of wealth – and low boundaries – capacity to quickly go out of the social programs (Péré *et alii*, 2004, 26).

3.4. Developing relationships with social housing landlords

The derogatory programs that charities manage propose more precarious tenures than usual tenures. This may be seen as another side of the stigmatisation we have already evoked. Therefore a certain discourse tends to justify these precarious tenures as they should prepare a coming back to ordinary tenures.

Mr Cadoussal: As migrant workers "foyers" were transformed into social residences, we could have said: "Let's demolish all these "foyers" and have everybody return to ordinary housing". But there can be a lighter version, saying that they play a transitory role.

But the exit towards ordinary housing is a serious problem. Some charities thus develop sustained

relationship with ordinary landlords, mainly social housing landlords¹⁰. For example Mrs Elisse assigned an agent to the partnership with social landlords.

This way of working is well-spread. The 1980s-90s saw the arrival of dedicated services, and even the mutualization of resources in “rehousing collectives” (group of charities) that exclusively seek social housing for the people getting out of these charities’ programs. Besides these specific services the partnership with social landlords is part of the daily job of social workers.

Lastly, some organisms, social housing lessors as well as charities are developing within their own structure services that would allow to manage the different segments of a “residential chain”. For example, the Aftam, a charity which manages migrant workers’ “foyers” and social residences is currently creating its own social housing company, openly aiming to re-house more easily the occupants of the social residences it runs. Reversely some lessors are creating their own managing charities or integrate charities into their group¹¹. Derogative devices and common law social housing are then managed in the same group. These evolutions are still recent and it's too early now to know more about their effects.

These solutions adopted to cope with the different double-binds show that housing charities are key actors in the integration through housing policies. They not only implement this public policy but also invent new tools and participate in creating this policy field. Nevertheless, these charities’ room for manoeuvre is limited, since they have ambivalent relationships with administrations.

4. Ambivalent relationship between charities and administrations¹²

In this part we will explain that charities may have strategies to circumvent the fund givers requirements, but with limited effects. The dependency on fund givers often alters charities’ projects – these charities can sometimes hardly find coherence to their own actions.

4.1. Funding and strategies

Despite the control from the administrations, charities may sometimes escape expectations on their activities. They can for example adapt their discourse according to the fund giver they are talking to, not altering though their usual way of intervention. This charity director explains the both strategic and precarious use of multiple funding sources (which he estimates being about twenty):

Mr Gallou: Each fund giver has his own way of considering things. [...] It's both fragile and solid. It's solid because today none of them represents more than 5% of our budget. So we are not fundamentally bind to one partner or fund giver. And at the same time it is fragile because in fact it obliges us to be constantly reactive and to seek the pursuing of the funding.

This director presents this situation in a positive way, and the social worker that was sitting next to him added that this situation made them be dynamic, which she considered a good thing.

Despite these forms of subverting the control and the funding, charities are in an uncomfortable position because they are set in competition with each other and they are subject to temporary funding whose aims are quite changeable. A former charity's director explains thus that seeking funds is time-consuming and that it is very dependent on funders' changes of mind:

10 Some experiences are also made toward private housings, but have a lesser dimension.

11 For example Opievoy and Logotel, Groupe Arcade and Alfi

12 For a discussion on charities' heteronomy and autonomisation strategies see also (Bertrand et Houard, 2006).

Mr Houdet: Some years I had to write four demands of subsidy [for homeless emergency help]. [...] You write a first project. After that you are asked to rewrite it because the budget is not like this or like that. Then in September, you get called and one asks you: "How comes that you have so low results?" You answer: "Well, it's rather normal, you are just financing one post". [...] "Really? We are just financing one post? We are going to ask specific funds for you". So in a hurry you write a third financing project. And then at the end of the year you are said: "Guess what? Some money remains, you should write a new demand".

4.2. On the definition of charities' projects

The question of the autonomy of the agents of integration through housing policies is also important considering the way the projects they implement are defined. Gradually, the biggest charities are led to undertake more and more various duties, which can threaten the general coherence of the charity itself. The case of Logisalia shows the strengths and weaknesses of a charity that could not be bypassed on its territory of intervention. Its director describes the difficulty to find coherence between historical caritative activities – financed by beneficence actions and held by volunteers – and professional services – which are more and more numerous, financed by public funding and held by salaries with specialised skills.

As this director first declares: "we are here to organise and set up the actions that administrations of local authorities entrust to us". But the description of his relationship with administrations nuance this pattern. Logisalia could once refuse to conform to the changing point of view of the administration: this administration foresaw to make a former emergency shelter that was painfully transformed into longer-term housing centre some year before get back to its original status of emergency shelter. To impose its point of view, Logisalia had to threaten this administration to give up another service and to let other local charities write a collective letter proclaiming that no other charity would manage this service.

This example is probably exceptional. On plenty of other requirements, Logisalia had to give up. Fundamentally one has the impression that administrations' prescriptions come first and charities' adaptation second. Mr Houdet seems to describe the heteronomy in which these charities are set:

Mr Houdet: Charities are asked to "professionalize", I don't understand very very well, because I think that they are really professional, but they are fragile. They are fragile because they are made fragile. When they fail, they are said: "See, you are not professionals ". When you analyse why they bankrupt, they bankrupt because of treasury's problems, because subventions get not paid in time, because sometimes they develop news actions without being sure they will be funded, but with such a pressure that they couldn't do anything else. I think that someday charities should say: "No, we won't start. We won't do it. Till we are not financed, we won't do it".

Thus the "project management process" the charities undertake and the self-evaluation patterns we evoked sounds like the attempts to create "firm cultures". It is not impossible to see there a rhetorical adaptation below institutional requirements. These approaches cannot create such a strong identity that it could resist a new demand or requirement from the funders which would not correspond to the charity's project and skills. To tell it in a perhaps too radical way, there is certain schizophrenia in defining the charity's project afterwards, ex-post.

Conclusion: a concrete lack of activation means

To conclude, we would like to underline some fundamental difficulties that the policies of integration through housing have to face – difficulties that we think partly predetermine the double-binds we described and their resolution.

First of all it really seems that the famous individual adaptation is not feasible because of a lack of funding: adaptation and counselling won't be available for all potential recipients. Obviously all of them do not need to be counselled. The 1998 Act “against all forms of exclusion” introduces a distinction between households that face financial difficulties, for whom only a financial support is needed, and households that cumulate financial and “social integration” difficulties, for whom a social counselling is also required. This distinction is important if one wants to keep the counselling for “those who really need it”¹³. But there again, are there sufficient funding allocated to counsel those who indeed need it? Probably not, which stresses the selection of final recipients.

Moreover, if adaptation and activation were available for all recipients, would they anyway find a dwelling? Perhaps, in a long term, general activation of disaffiliated population might create a dynamic of growth and employment, but for instance many recipients of integration through housing services stay at the door of the “autonomous and ordinary” housing.

Mr Houdet: The difficulty of short-term housing centre is well-known, and it's also true for social residences and other temporary housing programs: charities do their job but people stay in the service, not because of the services' fault, but merely because there is no exit solution.

Or as M.Cadoussal explains:

M. Cadoussal: There is an interpretation which says: “Be careful, we are transposing patterns from social assistance to housing but now the real problem is the lack of inexpensive housing for people who are poor.”

This shortage of ordinary housing directly affects the exit possibility and strengthens the pressure on efficiency. For those who cannot find a way of exiting the program, the nature of the counselling changes because it loses its temporary shape. Isn't there a risk of creating new forms of tutelage without the name¹⁴? On the other hand aren't there recipients for whom a simple and temporary counselling is somehow inadequate? The transitory aspect of the adapted solutions of integration through housing should be questioned¹⁵.

Beyond this, can we think a massive problem as if it were the addition of atomized individual problems, that should be just taken into account individually? As we saw it, recategorizations are built in daily public actions; the adaptation has a limit in the selection of the most capable recipients; charities' flexibility also serves the administration's changes of mind. One of the keys to this problem is that ordinary housing solutions for poor people – in France it means mainly social housing – seems to depend more on a collective choice than on individual problems. The core question is then to decide what should be of individual responsibility and what should be of collective solidarity.

13 See the discussion of Jon Elster on various interpretations of who should be « those who need it most » (Jon Elster, 1992).

14 Benoit Eyraud distinguishes between accompaniment and tutelage by the fact that accompaniment is temporary and oriented towards a promotion of individual an tutelage is durable and aim only on managing individual finances in his or her place (Eyraud, 2005).

15 We have here to mention that a quite experimental device, the “*maison-relais*” is proposing long-term housing to particularly disaffiliated people.

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