

*Revue française des affaires sociales*

Multidisciplinary call for contributions on

**"Residential pathways and housing policy, the years 2000"**

**For the July-September 2016 issue**

This call for contributions is aimed at researchers in sociology, anthropology, geography, political science, history, law, public health, psychiatry, economics and philosophy, as well as stakeholders in the social protection field.

The closing date for submitting articles is **1 February 2016**.

**Housing has shown itself to be an integral part of social welfare and social protection policy** since the late 19th century. This has been demonstrated by the countless efforts to crack down on slums in Great Britain and the wide range of private measures then carried out by legal schemes in France (Siegfried law of 1894, or Loucheur law of 1928 for example), followed by the introduction of housing benefits in the social security family branch in 1948, and the action taken following the Abbé Pierre's and Emmaüs Association's work in the years after that, etc.

Nowadays, housing is addressed by an active policy undertaken by national or local governmental departments which are taking account of savings, heritage, the environment, construction, health, spatial planning and "urban policy" ... The French Ministry of Social Affairs continues to wield significant influence, particularly by supervising organisations and professions and overseeing schemes that play a key role among populations in this respect (Family Allowance Funds, social workers, management of emergency housing and so on).

**Over the past decade housing has proven to be of central concern in the "crisis" and in exclusion pathways** because of:

- *the lack of available housing* probably across-the-board, but certainly at least "in the right place at the right time and under the right conditions – in terms of size and price in particular – to meet needs";

- the rise in the *cost of housing* and bills and, consequently, in the *affordability ratio* for low- and middle-income categories. Sometimes accounting for more than 40% of their budget, housing (and related bills) now has a major impact on the "discretionary income" of some households and, for much of the population, is a factor in the aggravation of financial difficulties or "living conditions", due to housing that is too small, poorly heated or run-down;

- *new strategies by public and private stakeholders*, recently set up in response to various trends (planned or unplanned) of the past decades. For example, the public authorities are today struggling to react to the troubles created or exacerbated by urban concentrations in the form of "housing estates"; the depopulation of some remote areas calls for incentives to maintain a minimum level of public services and to encourage economic restructuring in rural areas. For their part, households have reacted by developing specific strategies (about which we are still relatively in the dark) in response to the financial changes affecting the sector, as well as to cope with new challenges concerning such issues as schooling, safety, isolation with regard to shops and services, cohabitation and spatial segregation;

- *the involvement of the State and local authorities*, which has changed significantly, as well as *the plethora of specific schemes*. With the many public stakeholders now on the scene, it is rather a case of "too many cooks spoiling the broth", and the housing situation is struggling to improve.

The most recent edition of the national Housing survey (ENL) conducted by the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) – one of the main sources of information in this field – is currently being processed. Researchers will be able to make use of the survey's findings by the summer of 2015 *via* an agreement.<sup>1</sup> This opportunity must be seized: the 2013-2014 survey follows on from the 2006 one: it is a rare, invaluable resource at a time when changes are coming thick and fast. Moreover, a key project by the French Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) is under way on populations marginalised from ordinary housing, making particular use of the Homeless 2012 survey and Longitudinal Survey on Young People's Access to Independence after Social Care (ELAP).<sup>2</sup> Lastly, the forthcoming annual report on habitat by the French National Observatory on Poverty and Social Exclusion (ONPES), due to be published at the end of 2016, will gather together the most recent findings on the housing conditions of poor and modest households, poor housing, housing services and affordability ratios, as well as the residential pathways of specific populations (young people, people who have been homeless at one time or evicted, etc.).

In this context, the *Revue française des affaires sociales* is after contributions that look both at housing in the strict sense of the term (*the home – house, flat, residence – where we seek shelter day and night*), and at habitat (*characteristics of the "environment" in which a population can live and thrive*)...

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<sup>1</sup> The survey's financial data is only provisional for the time being, and will be made available to researchers once incomes have been matched to the tax bases. These files will be available via the Quêtelet network at the end of 2015 or very beginning of 2016.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ined.fr/fr/recherche/projets-recherche/P0625>

But the intention of **this call for contributions** is not to apply to all topics relating to housing. Rather, it **concentrates on four topics**, looked at from different perspectives:

- that of households,
- that of local areas and their governance,
- that of specific groups for whom housing has a specific social impact,
- and lastly that of schemes, many of which have recently been set up in the hope of "lifting out of the crisis" those households and populations who are struggling the most.

Although the main focus here will be on the present-day situation, historical or comparative perspectives may nonetheless prove beneficial to the analysis of recent data.

This call is aimed at researchers working in a wide range of subject areas (e.g. economics, statistics, geography, sociology, anthropology, political science or law).

A variety of sources may be used, including those geared towards social work, the utilisation of institutional data, or the application of quantitative or qualitative methods to secondary analyses of the ENL and of other national statistics surveys – *Occupation du parc social (Occupation of the social housing sector)*, *Commercialisation des logements neufs (Marketing of new housing)*, *Performance de l'habitat, équipements, besoins et usages de l'énergie (Habitat performance, energy uses, needs and equipment/Phébus)* Homeless survey – or more local studies, for example those by the *Local observatories for habitat and rents*.

## **1- Households' residential pathways**

### 1.1. Geographic movements

We will be interested in hearing about the causes of and processes involved in the "exodus away from towns" observed since the turn of the new millennium, about the relationship between suburbs and town centres and about inter-regional movement strategies; some of the collective consequences of these individual pathways (areas of depopulation, prices and rents, etc.) may be brought to light in this way.

### 1.2. Life courses from the point of view of places and residence patterns

Of particular interest are cotenancies, the arrangements of generations or couples living together-moving out, the "nomadic lifestyles of young people" or, on the other hand, living with parents for long spells or moving back in with them. What is the impact on housing of the changes concerning number of children, marital breakups, or migrations towards retirement homes? An assessment of the impact of demographic changes on the options and demand for housing would be most welcome, as would a study of the specific pathways of people or families who have experienced housing problems (living on the street, in poor

housing, lodging with other people, being evicted, etc.).

1.3. Insights into the relationship between residential strategies and:

- employment,
- schooling,
- housing prices (rent, purchase) with or without public aid,
- housing quality – including its energy rating.

For it is most likely that this relationship has changed significantly over recent decades, sometimes obliging those involved to choose between contradictory demands. As such, residential "sacrifices" are justified by the requirements of a job that is ever harder to come by, families who move to get away from difficulties encountered in some schools or from bad experiences of the social mix, or benefits that are no longer enough to afford housing conditions enjoyed in the past.

## **2- Housing policies of local authorities**

### 2.1 The habitat and housing in the policies of local authorities

Where do the questions of habitat and housing now stand for local authorities? Are such policies a cause for disagreement between political parties?

This question can be illustrated by looking at the analysis of municipal or *département*-wide election campaigns, especially the most recent, or by analysing the changes that newly elected officials have made to projects set up by previous teams.

Can a coherent typology of municipal and *département*-wide strategies be drawn up in the habitat and housing sphere?

Do urban authorities have the only say in deliberations on habitat and housing, for example on the subject of the social melting pot?

What are the land banking policies, and are Local Habitat Plans binding in any way when they exist?

We will also be interested in the undertakings of some local authorities in favour of innovative habitat intervention methods (cooperative habitat, mixed construction programmes, intervention on habitat quality, urban renovation policies and so on).

### 2.2 "Very social" housing and local authorities

What analysis can be made of the actions and positions of local public authorities in terms of highly "sensitive" policies and how can public opinion in this area be analysed? Analyses of very specific situations would be particularly welcome.

For example, how are the existence and setup of accommodation centres or halting sites for travellers fitted into local settings? At a time when access to social housing is restricted, what criteria do practitioners of the French DALO law (enforceable right to housing) use to manage the imbalances between rehousing supply and demand, and organise residential transitions? Does implementation of this law lead to negative reactions to housing? Is the local development of housing for very disadvantaged segments of society – financed, for example, by PLAI funds in France – supported by local elected officials and populations?

Analyses of where the question of housing falls in local social work and what forms it takes will also be looked at with interest. To what conditions and objectives do social landlords commit social workers to monitor the situation of their tenants? Has housing now or once again become a "doorway" for forging ties with families who are struggling the most? What relationships and types of collaboration are built between social workers employed by institutions such as landlords, Family Allowance Funds and local authorities?

### *2.3 Link between different territorial levels*

Does the interlinking of interventions by local authorities at different levels make it possible for them to work together (through joint funding, contribution of land at one level, State aid to encourage real estate investment at another, etc.) in a way that benefits policy, or does it lead to deadlock?

Is the whole easy to understand, coherent, redundant, well targeted? On the other hand, are we dealing with conflicting objectives, "Not In My Backyard" type phenomena, with local managers approving the policy principles that they would nonetheless prefer to see applied elsewhere, or local officials refusing to commit to actions for which they reckon the State support received is too limited?

What judgement should be made of the effectiveness of State "incentive" policies in terms of habitat and housing, in the light of such phenomena?

### **3- Housing access for specific groups and populations**

Some populations can encounter specific problems when trying to access housing. Examples of such groups who do not seem to be the focus of current research elsewhere (ONPES, INED, etc.) include: dependent elderly people, disabled people, owners or co-owners of run-down housing, separated families or stepfamilies.

Any answers that can be given to such problems and their development over time can have a very marked impact on the need for housing with specific characteristics.

Two types of questions can be addressed:

### 3.1 Is it possible to pinpoint specific situations from the data available?

What are the housing conditions for such populations, what would they like and what difficulties do they encounter? Is the landscape for such categories of people shifting because of demographic and technological changes (home automation for example) or new aspirations?

### 3.2 How does the "housing" dimension of specific situations tie in with other requirements?

We are particularly thinking of all situations in which people – possibly families – need not just independent housing tailored to enable them to become part of "everyday" society, but also additional "social", "medico-social" or "health" services. Since the 1960s, a consensus automatically formed on the priority given to the "home" rather than "the establishment" in such diverse fields as mental health, ageing, social rehabilitation and disability in general.

Significant changes have been observed in these fields. And yet, these complex policies still find themselves up against diverse obstacles. Some obstacles are material or psychological in nature, but others result above all from the difficulty in reconciling the different regulations (concerning funding, occupation, development, etc.) governing the social services or establishments and the standards applicable to housing.

A precise analysis of the difficulties encountered by innovative projects in this field would provide useful food for thought for many stakeholders.

## **4- Recent specific schemes**

In addition to the "conventional" State aid for encouraging real estate investment and individual benefits – whose framework since the 1970s has barely changed – new schemes have been set up with great inventiveness at national and local level alike, following the initiative of a range of institutional stakeholders. Consideration is also being given to draft reforms to housing benefits at the moment. One example is taking benefits' seekers' assets into account when assessing their resources.

More specific interest will be shown in measures aimed at offering help or support on a more one-to-one basis to people who are, or risk, struggling in terms of housing. Many have been designed as prevention schemes: we could mention support in the event of unpaid rent, "solibail" type rental intermediation schemes (where landlords lease their property to associations which use it to house low-income families and in return pay the landlord the rent as tenant), renovation or fitting-out aid for owner-occupiers, organised cotenancy schemes (for example between young and elderly people), setting of social energy prices, as well as the increasing use – and overload – of the "115" hotline for emergency accommodation.

The sheer range of such schemes makes it difficult to have a clear overview of them today.

The following would particularly be worthwhile:

4.1 Analyzing the questions raised by looking at the links connecting these schemes either to the general schemes, or between themselves.

4.2 Assessing the impact of some of these schemes on the objectives set

If you would like to find out more about the content of this call for contributions, please email Marianne Berthod-Wurmser and Lucie Gonzalez, who are in charge of drafting the issue, at the following addresses:

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The closing date for contribution entries is 1 February 2016 at the following address:

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