



WILCO

Welfare innovations
at the local level
in favour of cohesion

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URBAN POLICY INNOVATIONS IN LOCAL WELFARE IN LILLE, FRANCE

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INTRODUCTION

Socio-economic developments in Lille need to be seen in the context of the history of transformations within Lille Metropolitan area and the Nord-Pas-de Calais region. The region started to become highly industrialized in the 19th century due to the presence of coal mines, steel works and the traditional textile industry. A long deindustrialisation process has strongly affected the historical working class and the labour market inclusion of new generations who have to face high degrees of unemployment and a rise of social vulnerabilities. The development of the metropolitan area has been the cornerstone of the strategies launched since the 1980s to exploit a strategic location, halfway between London and Paris and very close to Brussels. Lille has been at the heart of the metropolisation process and development and has taken advantage of the shift from an industry-led economy to an economy open to Europe where the service sector prevails.

During the last twenty years, Lille has successfully changed its image, becoming a more and more attractive city. Well connected by high-speed trains to London, Paris and Brussels, their strategic geographical position has offered Lille and the surrounding areas the opportunity of becoming a gateway from France to northern Europe. The business district Euralille has become the symbol of the city's conversion to the service economy in the 1990s. Moreover, Lille has become a student city, home to more and more young people, both students and young workers. In 2004, Lille was the European Capital of Culture and sought to integrate the role of culture in a new development model. The media success of the cultural events was accompanied by investment in cultural infrastructures, such as transformation of factories into experimental cultural centres, and the increased prestige of Lille's historic patrimony. Starting this year, culture has become part of Metropolitan area's attraction strategy.

Discourse on innovation is a component of this new metropolitan picture. However, the main innovation policy frameworks remain focused on economic development, research, technological investment, information technology and support for entrepreneurship. Stimulation of innovation is, for instance, integrated into the Lille Metropolis' economic development agenda with specific programmes such as "Pôle de compétitivité" (competitiveness clusters), industry, and sectors of excellence. In this context, debate on innovation at the Lille Metropolis council promotes visible economic urban projects such as EuraTechnologies.

However, despite the new economic strategy combined with substantial housing, building and urban renovation efforts as well as investment in childcare places during the last ten years (see part 2), the city continues to suffer from significant social disparities and polarisations. The proportion of temporary employments (fixed term contracts, subsidized jobs, temporary work and apprenticeships) is higher in Lille than in the Metropolis Area (LMCU) and in France. In 2008, Lille saw 21% of wage earners in temporary employment compared to around 15% at LMCU and national levels (INSEE 2009). The 2010 unemployment rate in the sensitive urban zone (ZUS) was 27.4 % (compared to 11.4% for the economic zone) and a third of unemployed workers in the Lille urban area live in a deprived neighbourhood. Income distribution amongst the population of Lille is less homogeneous than regional or national distribution. Finally, the numbers of single-parent families increased between 1999 and 2008 (+1,121 households) while the number of couples with children decreased by 20.3%.

Politically, Lille has almost always been governed by the Socialist Party. One of its emblematic political figures was Pierre Mauroy, former Prime Minister of France, and Mayor from 1973 to 2001. His successor, Martine Aubry, who is standing for office for the third time, is also a national political leader. Former General Secretary of the Socialist

Party, she was candidate to the internal primary election for the Presidential election in 2011.

During the last municipal term (2008-2014), Lille was administered by a left-wing coalition dominated by the Socialist Party (PS) with the participation of elected representatives from the Green Party (EELV), Communist Party (PC), and Democratic Movement (MoDem) This political alliance constitutes the current municipal majority. The coalition “Union pour Lille (UPL)” represents the main elected representatives of the right-wing opposition, made up of members of the Union for the Presidential Majority (UMP) as well as local independent politicians. This is the main force of political opposition in the municipal council. There are a few independent and isolated local representatives who have left the municipal opposition (UPL). The National Front has no representatives on the municipal council and had until now much less influence than in other cities of the North-Pas de Calais region.

1.2. General policy values and theme of controversies

In a political context dominated by the socialist party and with right-wing leaders who have often been sensitive to social cohesion issues, major differences of political values concerning the local welfare system are not obvious. The main distinctive electoral issue highlighted by the UPL’s recent press statement¹ and electoral programme is security, a traditional right-wing policy field. The municipal opposition criticises Martine Aubry’s lack of commitments for ideological reasons. The Mayor considers that security is a State responsibility and the number of police officers decreased in Lille during Sarkozy’s Presidency.

The main local welfare debate concerns the local authorities’ responsibility and need to take initiatives, reinforce dedicated actions and build specific programmes for developing job opportunities, vocational training and inclusion pathways for young people in the context of a deteriorating labour market. The lack of investment in this field is one of the main criticisms formulated by the municipal opposition (UPL)². Drawing on some of the conclusions reached by an assessment³ of municipal urban policy, they consider that there is under-investment in the employment and economic development fields with regard to “sensitive urban neighbourhoods,” while these areas have experienced a major increase in unemployment among young people. UPL proposes a reorientation of part of urban social cohesion credits from social and citizenship actions to the creation of neighbourhood economic development agencies to be able to mobilize small and medium-sized companies and to generate local entrepreneurship projects.

It is possible to identify an ideological position, where the right wing considers that the reduction of urban neighbourhood polarisation and labour market discrimination cannot only be reduced by an urban social cohesion plan, which mainly supports association-based initiatives (as opposed to private companies), but does not generate serious job opportunities for young people. However, at the same time, the right wing has contested the employment impacts on the local population of emblematic and costly economic projects implemented in deprived neighbourhoods, such as *Euratechnologies*, *Eurasanté* or the *Fashion House*. The policy values displayed are a mix between a traditional position in

¹ See the press statement of 20 September 2013 on the UPL website.

<http://www.unionpourelille.org/>

² See UPL declaration during a municipal council session or its position in “Quels emplois pour qui ?” (“What jobs for whom?”) in Lille mag no. 77.

³ CIRESE, “Accompagnement à l’évaluation du projet urbain de cohésion sociale 2007-2009.” (Assessment guide for the urban social cohesion project 2007-2009), final report.

favour of efficient uses of municipal public spending and a recurrent denunciation of a two-speed development of the city. Socialist leaders point to the results of the local youth employment scheme launched by the municipality in 2011. 1,100 jobs for young people have been created thanks to the mobilisation of the directors of major local companies, particularly in the hotel and restaurant, retail and building sectors.

A final area of controversy is the denunciation of the participative democracy policy implemented by the municipal majority through the creation of neighbourhood councils. For the municipal opposition, debates in such local bodies would be organised and controlled by the municipal councillors, which would not allow the expression of discordant voices. However, the present right-wing candidate for the municipal election is not asking for the suppression of such local councils, but for more transparency and a more balanced composition of the members.

For the coming election, the Green Party (EELV) and the Left Front (including the Communist Party) have decided to present their own candidates. The division of the left coalition could be explained by Martine Aubry's status as a Socialist Party favourite as well as national political considerations at a period when Hollande's government is suffering from high unpopularity. Part of the municipal majority, the Left Front is proposing a programme that insists on a better reduction of social inequalities by improving and investing in public services, employment, housing and welfare policies. The Greens concentrate on better living conditions, tackling traditional urban ecological issues (protecting biodiversity, reducing pollution, alternative forms of transport, shared gardens, etc.) but also a growing focus on social innovations (participative housing plan, social and solidarity-based economy initiatives, participative democracy, etc.). Both parties would also promote active citizenship and inhabitants' participation. As far as economic development issues are concerned, the metropolisation economic strategy and contested emblematic projects (Euralille, Euratechnologies, project for a large football stadium, etc.) in partnership with major local companies are not at the heart of these programmes; they put far more emphasis on reinforcing the local economy and social and solidarity-based enterprises (the Greens) or public services, trades and crafts activities (the Left Front). However, their proposals globally want to go further on local urban and welfare policies rather than implementing radical reorientations of municipal priorities.

2. SECTORIAL VALUES AND DEBATES

2.1. Housing and urban renewal policies

Lille is the principal city of Lille Metropolis (LMCU), the fourth-largest metropolitan area in France after those of Paris, Lyon and Marseilles. Housing is one of the most urgent issues in Lille because of the multiple tensions caused by the evolution of the housing market and difficult living conditions. Moreover, housing is politically a key jurisdiction for local authorities (especially cities and the Metropolis), shared with the State. The housing policy debate is dominated by the quantitative issue mainly due to a structural housing shortage.

The main political issues generally cited by the local policy makers interviewed are:

- Increasing prices in the private rental market. In 10 years, Lille has become one of the most expensive large cities in France (just behind Paris and Nice), either for buying or renting a dwelling. The tight private rental market is emphasised by the high number of students, the relatively small size of private apartments for rent and the absence of residential zones. One of the consequences is the lack of large

and affordable apartments for families, who tend to leave Lille city centre, but also for single parents and reconstituted families.

- The number of social housing units available is insufficient to meet the growing demand and longer waiting lists. 48,000 requests a year are registered on average in the Metropolis area and 16,400 in Lille alone, whereas the number of allocated units is about 2,600 per year. This pressure on, and low rotation rate in, social housing stock is explained by elected councillors as well as civil servants as being due to a lower average income of households in Lille than at the national level or comparable Metropolis areas.
- The risk of urban and social polarisation between neighbourhoods in Lille and cities in the Lille Metropolis area.
- The relative high degree of insalubrity in part of the historical private housing stock composed of former working-class houses in old neighbourhoods, which is specific to the Lille Metropolis area in comparison with similar urban zones.

The predominance of quantitative issues

The Local Housing Plan (2005-2012) has constituted a common framework guiding political action for Lille Municipality and Lille Metropolis since 2005. This document expresses a long-term shared diagnosis, vision, and objectives. It is presented by local authorities as the result of consultation processes involving different municipalities, representatives, local administrations, and the main regional housing board and local associations.

Thus, thanks to parliamentary council deliberations and local media articles, we can easily identify the main topics on the local housing agenda:

- “Build more”, with the construction of 6,000 new dwellings per year in Lille Metropolis including 2,000 social housing units. There are regular statements issued by the municipal council and in the Lille magazine on the implementation of new buildings or the creation of social housing;
- The renovation of old social housing stock with one of the most important urban renewal plans negotiated between Lille and the National Agency of Urban Renovation (ANRU);
- The promotion of social diversity (social mix) with dwellings adapted to disabled and dependant elderly persons, housing for students, intergenerational cohabitation, and emergency and inclusion shelters;
- Support for the urban affairs policy through the vote and introduction at the municipal level of a Social Urban Cohesion Contract (CUCS);
- Sustainable housing improvements by making the current housing stock more energy efficient and experimenting with eco-districts.

There are no major local disputes about these objectives, from either the political opposition, social landlords or the various housing associations.

What role for social innovations?

Qualitative initiatives are present in local housing governance, but have a secondary role in a political agenda focusing on quantitative objectives (“building more”, “urban renewal operations”, “social diversification”, etc.). However, the Local Housing Plan also includes an innovation “component” named “experimentations” in each of the main priority areas. According to the municipal government, the initiatives that could be valued as innovative focus primarily on citizen participation. One example was the call for projects on

“participative housing”⁴ in 2011 that provides five sites for testing production of housing with the involvement of a group of families. Whereas the first participative housing projects were private initiatives grouping families willing to living differently in the 80s, this small-scale programme is indicative of the integration of such urban innovation within the local housing policy framework thirty years later. Participative governance was illustrated by a consensus conference⁵ on housing launched in 2011. One of the concrete outputs has been the creation of a “Maison de l’Habitat Durable” (sustainable housing centre), acting as a single showcase that centralises all the information on every kind of housing for residents. Another experimental initiative is the renovation programme (“renoteam”) of private dwellings based on mutual aid with teams of 8 to 10 owners, and technical assistance for DIY rehabilitation. On the supply side, the innovative projects promoted are intergenerational residential complexes, the promotion of social home ownership, and the obligation for private property developers to introduce 30% of social housing in major urban constructions located in neighbourhoods with less than 20% of social housing.

A relative political consensus on the main housing priorities

The field of housing is not subject to public controversies within the local political sphere. The municipal political opposition as well as the municipal housing experts and the leaders of the main associations agree on the diagnosis and the main priorities. This relative consensus can be partly explained by three factors. Firstly, the key and increasing role played by Lille Metropolis within local housing policies requires a certain amount of permanent discussion, negotiation and compromise between elected officials from different cities. Secondly, new administrations dedicated to housing policies in Lille municipalities as well as at the Metropolitan level are composed of expert and motivated civil servants who contributed to the building of the recent common consensus. Thirdly, the political culture of the main local elected officials from the right who are relatively moderate and sensitive to social cohesion issues. However, behind public consensus on the priorities to build more with a better social and territorial balance between neighbourhoods and municipalities, several tensions are in practice identifiable.

How to overcome housing social polarisation and urban geographical unbalance?

If nobody is publicly against the social mix and geographical balance of housing, the considerations and practices on which priority target groups and access criteria are based, the territorial distribution of social housing between municipalities and the shared power to allocate social housing are sources of debate. At the Lille municipal level, the right-wing opposition has regularly expressed its concerns about the risk that housing and urban policies are unable to reduce social and urban polarizations. They regret the departure of families and the middle class from the city centre. The rise in housing market prices limits access to property and to affordable rental apartments for family households that are not potential beneficiaries of social housing allowances. In others words, the left-wing municipal majority is sometimes considered as giving too much priority to the most disadvantaged through social housing construction and access criteria. Electoral considerations on the household compositions of the social mix are not absent from such political positioning.

But more specifically, it is at the metropolitan area level (LMCU) that these issues are sensitive because of sharper territorial disparities and the shift of housing responsibilities between LMCU and the municipalities. The first classical issue is the differentiated

⁴ Inhabitants come together to conceive and build their future housing.

⁵ A consensus conference is made up of a panel of citizens who question expert witnesses on a particular topic at a public conference. Their recommendations are then widely circulated.

implementation of the SRU Law (Solidarity and Urban Renewal Act) that obliges every municipality with over 3,500 inhabitants to build at least 20% of social housing. Even if the biggest cities (Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing and Villeneuve d'Acscq) in the metropolitan area have a large stock of social housing, other medium-sized municipalities have not reached the threshold yet. They have to make serious efforts to improve their situation with regard to the LMCU's common and specific commitment to achieve the objective to introduce 30% of social housing in each new housing project. However, there has not been any official disagreement. It is not politically correct to openly state that one is not willing to build social housing in one's municipality. In fact, the divergence seems to be more and more about which kind of social housing should be built as a priority and the role assigned to social housing for the most vulnerable.

Tensions about metropolitan settlement policy (“politique de peuplement”) and common access criteria for social housing in the Metropolitan area

More interesting are the differing standpoints of official elected representatives about the social rebalancing of settlement policies between the different municipalities in the metropolitan area. One of the breakthroughs introduced by the recent new Local Housing Plan adopted in December 2012 is the introduction of an inter-municipal “politique de peuplement” (settlement agreement) after a long multi-stakeholder process of consultation. Beyond a better distribution of the building effort of social housing between municipalities, the decision is to share common access criteria for priority target households between municipalities and social landlords. Despite a common inter-municipal agreement signed between Lille Metropolis and all the social landlords for an annual allocation of lodgings to socially vulnerable families, most of the rightist or independent mayors (about twenty medium-sized and small municipalities) abstained during the vote. Several are reluctant to see any transfer of the responsibility for deciding on conditions for allocating social housing to the residents in their municipality. Behind criticism of the reduction of an important municipal prerogative, they expressed the fear of losing control over settlement policies in their communities.

Local and political multi-governance controversies on national housing policy

Similarly to the childcare field, some of the main disputes in the housing field were focused on the contribution and impacts of national housing policy on the local housing agenda of Sarkozy's government. With regards to the Lille urban renewal plan, the municipal opposition likes to recall that this ambitious scheme has been implemented thanks to a financial contribution of 110 million euros by the National Agency of Urban Renovation. Various elected officials⁶ from the majority have taken a public stance on the municipal council and in the local media against the new tax on social landlords in 2011. They have denounced the negative consequences of the pace of planning for new social housing. A municipal motion against the national government followed President Sarkozy's speech on “irregular Roma camps” in July 2010. The opposition denounced the confusion between national and local affairs, and the exploitation of the national agenda for avoiding a discussion on the concrete situation of Roms in the Lille urban area. These kinds of multi-governance controversies are a combination of a real divergence of opinions on social housing policies, disputes on the allocation of resources between the State and local authorities, and politician posturing coming from a city ruled by Martine Aubry, a national political figure who was, until 2012, general secretary of the socialist party and candidate for the internal primary election ahead of the 2012 presidential election. Since the Hollande presidency, such municipal statements on national policy are no longer relevant, reflecting political closeness with the present government. Thus, the previous city

⁶ For instance, the declarations of [Audrey Linkenheld](#), the municipal councilor in charge of housing, or of the communist representative, municipal council September 2011.

councillor for housing, Audrey Linkenheld, is presently a socialist deputy and very active in the parliamentary housing commission.

The persistence of a “two-tier city” despite an ambitious urban renovation plan?

The right wing’s warning of the risk of creating a “two-tier city” is also based on a critical assessment of local urban policy. The reorientation of Social Cohesion Urban Contract (CUCS) objectives and budgets towards economic development and employment rather than citizenship and social actions is a recurrent demand. This sceptical position on the results of urban policy is also reflected in the statement on the Fund for Promoting Resident Involvement (*Fonds de participation des habitants*). Behind the claim of an official assessment of this municipal scheme, which supports 340 projects and 254 associations, it is interesting to note that the main criticism focuses less on quantitative housing planning than on the schemes that are the main source of funding for supporting qualitative and innovative urban strategies.

Discordant voices issuing from the associative movement argue the inadequate achievements of policies and programmes dedicated to the access of socially vulnerable households to social housing. The first objection concerns the implementation of the DALO law that introduced the enforceable right to housing in 2008, but which is difficult to put into practice. The local representative of the central government, the Préfet, collaborating with the main social landlords, is unable to cope with the rise in requests from precarious families recognised as being eligible by the court. The outcomes of the urban renewal operations negotiated between Lille and the National Agency of Urban Renovation (ANRU) are also subject to different assessments. Municipal housing experts insist on the historical effort of restructuring several deprived neighbourhoods (Lille Sud), with more apartments built than demolished and a diversification of the social composition of poor districts. Grassroots actors underlined the unaffordable rents in the new social dwellings for the most precarious families and the persistence of pockets of poverty at the micro level. It is worth noting that these critical comments are focused on laws and programmes (ANRU, DALO) framed and partly funded by the central government with multi-governance processes for local implementation.

Finally, protest associations such as Droit au logement (Right to Housing) underlined the reluctance of local politicians and administration to explore radical options such as the requisition of vacant housing or private rent control. It is interesting to note that in 2012 the present housing ministry announced, without success for the moment, the requisition of vacant dwellings at the national level, and is going to introduce in law a regulation mechanism for the private rental market.

2.1 Childcare

Predominance of quantitative objectives over qualitative actions

Debates on childcare policies deal firstly with quantitative issues. The number of openings created compared to the commitment made during the 2008 municipal election is the main indicator of success used by the municipal councillors. In the mid-term report (October 2011), the representative⁷ in charge of municipal childcare policy underlines that 216 new openings in crèches have been created since 2008. Articles on projects to create and

⁷ Lise Daleux, “Crèches à Lille : où en est-on ?” (What is happening at day care centres in Lille?), <http://lille.verts.fr>

implement new childcare facilities with additional openings are regularly published in Lille Magazine.

There is a *relative political and institutional consensus* on this quantitative priority based on the convergent views of municipal policy makers, local childcare institutions (family allowance office), early childhood professionals and parents about the local shortage of supply related to a growing demand in a context of the local positive birth rate. Beyond the creation of new places in view of a long waiting list, it is interesting to note that improving work and family conciliation opportunities for mothers has become a shared vision in the local political spectrum. In other words, the conservative parties no longer consider that investing in childcare facilities is a secondary issue because taking care of young children would remain the primary responsibility of families and mothers as was the case during the Fordist period.

Giving priority of access to working mothers or the most vulnerable families?

However, an interview with a member of the municipal opposition brings our attention to the potential competition between families in accessing childcare services in a context of a shortage of places. The local family allowance offices as well as the municipality have made major efforts to facilitate access for single mothers to childcare services, considering that the lack of places is an important barrier to labour market integration. For the municipal opposition member, giving priority of access to unemployed mothers undergoing professional reintegration should not be done to the detriment of working mothers. The potential divergence of values between giving preference to children living in vulnerable families in the name of the reduction of social inequalities at an early age rather than mothers at work whatever their social situations is not unrelated to electoral and sociological considerations. Demographic projections⁸ predict a higher proportion of single-person households with no children in the coming decade, which reflects the fact that couples move out of Lille city centre when they have children. In this context, access to childcare places is becoming, after access to housing, a factor for maintaining families with two children.

Creating new places at any price? Multi-level controversies on quality of service

Childcare policies are rarely a subject on the agenda of the municipal opposition. However, criticism identified in the municipal council minutes focuses less on the quantitative priority of creating new openings than on the rhythm, the budget, and the kind of services supported to reach this objective. The insufficient number of openings created compared to the political commitment, the decrease in investment credits in 2010 as well as the refusal to consider private for-profit childcare providers as a serious option are the main points raised by the Union for Lille (UPL)⁹.

This municipal controversy often focuses on a debate on inadequate national childcare policy guidelines and funding. The municipal majority regrets the decrease from 63% to 55% of the family allowance office's (CAF) financial contribution to the operating budget of daycare centres. The municipal council's financial compensation¹⁰ of this national withdrawal can be seen as a sign of autonomy of the local welfare system; however, it is not without consequences on the local investment capacity. This decrease in funding from the national family allowance fund, which has been passed on to the municipal government, has a number of impacts on qualitative actions and innovative initiatives. For instance, actions such as training programmes for early childhood professionals, organising

⁸ INSEE 2009 "Demographic projection for Lille Agglomeration".

⁹ See public statements by Brigitte Mauroy and Isabelle Maheu on the UPL web site <http://www.unionpourelille.org/archives/>

¹⁰ Lise Daleux, "Intervention de Lise Daleux sur le contrat Enfance Jeunesse", <http://lille.lesverts.fr/Intervention-de-Lise-Daleux-sur-le>

activities and coordinating local childhood centres, parenthood support, and leisure and educational activities are considered to be “qualitative” by the family allowance office, which has progressively decreased or stopped funding them. Here again, the elected officials in charge of childcare services underline a partial and temporary financial compensation by the municipality.¹¹ But this leaves little room for future qualitative actions.

A second interesting fact was the two-day strike of early childhood professionals in 2010 and 2011 in reaction to the national decree of June 2010 reducing the rate of staff per child in daycare centres. These demonstrations, organised by a municipal and not-for-profit coalition, received the personal political support of Lille mayor, Martine Aubry. At the same time, a collective dedicated to “quality of services for all”¹² was created and organised local public debate on quality in childcare services. Behind this multi-governance controversy, the issue is again the fear that decreasing quality standards become a condition for creating new places or optimising existing places. All these multi-level governance controversies between policy orientations and the budget allocated by national childcare policies related to municipal childcare priorities can be viewed as testing the resilience and autonomy of the local childcare system.

Which kind of diversification of services and providers?

Diversification of services and providers has been a strategy promoted by national childcare policy to combine multiple childcare policy objectives in a context of an enduring shortage of places. The local configuration of mixed childcare provision in Lille is characterised by a predominance of regulated child-minder provision combined with a large number of municipal crèches and a significant number of third sector providers. The number of child-minders is mostly the result of national supply-side support, upon which municipalities have limited influence. However, depending on municipal childcare priorities, the proportions of places in public crèches, the historical presence of not-for-profit childcare services and the recent entry of for-profit private providers can vary from one city to another.

It is interesting to note that Lille municipality has been reluctant to implement the reforms and programmes from the previous right-wing government, especially the entry of for-profit providers for delivering childcare services, the development of micro-crèches that can accommodate a maximum of 11 children with lower quality requirements than traditional crèches, or the implementation of new kindergartens as alternative solutions to “écoles maternelles” (public pre-primary schools).

One illustration of this position is the municipal council’s reaction to the interpretation by the national government of the EU service directive with an official statement on securing municipal subsidies for local social services of general interest (SSIG). The concrete implication of this political commitment is the refusal to submit childcare providers to any competition rules or public procurement procedures. This move has been interpreted and criticized by the municipal opposition as a way of exclusively supporting municipal and association-based services to the exclusion of emerging for-profit providers in the childcare sector. A few private childcare services have been created during the last five years in Lille, but without receiving any financial support from the municipality. Their names do not figure on the official list of childcare providers delivered by the childcare municipal department to parents.

¹¹ Op.cit.

¹² Coalition composed by not-for-profit local umbrella organisations, such as Colline, URIOPSS and Innov enfance, social centres and local specific institutions like the Centre régional de la petite enfance (regional early childhood centre).

This position is viewed as ideological by representatives of the conservative party. The preference of the left-wing coalition (elected representatives in charge of childcare, professional practitioners and local not-for-profit umbrella organisations) for traditional collective services (municipal or associative crèches) is described by a member of the municipal opposition as a corporatist position hostile to any changes. In a context of lack of childcare services for parents and budget constraints, any new efficient and flexible solutions that facilitate work and family conciliation have to be promoted.

However, municipal support for collective care is also the consequence of fragmented childcare governance where individual care, mainly child-minder provision, is funded and regulated by the local family allowance office and the departmental council. Thus, Lille municipality has not been involved in the main initiatives taken by the Departmental Commission on Early Years Childcare (Commission Départemental pour l'accueil des jeunes enfants) for improving information to parents, geographical distribution, training and skills upgrading of child-minders in the Lille Metropolis areas.

Social innovations: an ambivalent concept in the age of public spending restrictions

The childhood and youth contract negotiated between Lille and the family allowance office gives less room to innovative strategies. Qualitative and innovative actions are positioned as secondary issues on the local political agenda. The child-care field illustrates existing tensions between local providers, local authorities and representatives of family policy in the ways innovative practices are promoted. Innovation is not absent from discourses and programmes but, far from being a convergent vision between local institutions, providers and professionals, interviews as well as empirical evidences indicate fragmented points of views about what is socially innovative in the field of childcare.

Budget constraints lead to a selection process relating to innovations. Supporting qualitative actions such as early childhood centres, parenthood actions or emergency home childcare services for low-income parents with atypical working hours is no longer a national priority in contrast to the classical quantitative objectives of increasing and optimising the number of places. Although considered as useful, initiatives supported a few years ago as innovative are now subject to decreasing funding. Financial support from the municipality can be partial and temporary in a context marked by budget restrictions. The future of former initiatives is much more uncertain, despite the recognition of their usefulness by elected representatives and municipal childcare experts.

However, it is worth noting that in parallel to the implementation of the rationalisation of national childcare expenses and declining support for qualitative actions negotiated with local actors, a national call for projects has been launched over the last few years on new priority issues such as improving integration of disabled children or childcare services with atypical hours. In addition, the local family allowance office (Nord department) has recently launched a call for projects to support innovative childcare initiatives, which are not funded within the framework of Childhood and Youth Contracts. For instance, the implementation in Lille by a not-for-profit organisation of a mobile childcare service dedicated to the children of traveller families received a grant of 15,000 euros in 2011.¹³ The multiplication of calls for projects is set to reconfigure methods for contracting and funding social innovation. All these calls for projects indicate a change in the conception of social innovation, which is considered less as bottom-up initiatives progressively recognised and integrated within the childcare political framework, but rather as local solutions to a top-down institutional agenda. In terms of content, the themes of these calls

¹³ See “Une crèche pour les gens du voyage” (A crèche for travellers) (in French) in the CAF Nord Newsletter. http://acteurs02.cafnord.fr/pages/en_direct_de.html

for projects tend to emphasise new care solutions or the adaptation of existing facilities to provide better access for vulnerable children (children who are disabled, living in a single-parent or poor family, etc.) Being socially innovative tends to be implicitly defined as the ability to integrate specific and targeted socially disadvantaged families. However, the fundamental issue of such calls for projects is the sustainability of funding beyond a one-shot support within a co-funding perspective. A few years ago, the local family office had its own funding budget for providing long-term support for bottom-up initiatives negotiated on a face-to-face basis and in cooperation with the local authorities.

The end of the civil society monopoly over social innovation discourse and actions?

Another interesting aspect is that social innovation is no longer the monopoly of organised civil society discourse and practice. Whereas in the 1990s not-for-profit organisations were considered key agents in childcare innovative practices, they are now in competition with local authorities. In a similar way to participatory democracy, social innovation is being progressively integrated into a new framework of local public action. Several initiatives, such as *Parler Bambins* or *Childhood Coordination Centers* (see WP5 report), have been launched by the municipalities rather than grassroots actors. Concerted support for child-minders is also presented by the Departmental Commission on Early Years Childcare as a successful social experiment. Associative umbrella organisations and coalitions are not inactive in the childcare welfare system. They actively participated in demonstrations against national childcare reforms. They participated in the Departmental Commission on Early Years Childcare and have close relations with the municipal elected representative in charge of childcare. However, their role in the co-production and diversification of a local supply of services, which was significant in the 1980s and 1990s, has been weakened in recent years by more restrictive public rules for management and funding and also by the governmental priority to support a for-profit private supply. Furthermore, it is not always easy to get parents and professionals involved, beyond the promotion of their local projects and initiatives, in overarching issues affecting policies. In consequence, childcare third sector leaders express doubt about social innovation discourses and programmes coming from local authorities, whereas existing and useful childcare services managed by associations are receiving less and less support.

Finally, it is interesting to note that certain new and cross-cutting fields of public action, such as policies dedicated to the social and solidarity-based economy (SSE), have opened windows of opportunity for social innovations (Fraisie, 2012) including initiatives in the childcare sector. Social innovation is a key concept used in the description of the social and solidarity-based plan developed by Lille. It is presented as an intrinsic characteristic of socio-economic initiatives and enterprises with participative governance and social goals (cooperatives, self-help initiatives, not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises, etc.). Initiatives such as the children's café (see WP5) or, more recently, the first Cooperative Society for Collective Interest (*Société coopérative d'intérêt collectif*) have been created in collaboration between the two municipal elected representatives in charge of childcare and of the social and solidarity-based economy. At a time when innovation rhetoric and budgets are monopolised by competitiveness and reindustrialisation development objectives and strategies, new fields of public action such as SSE local policies offer a window of opportunity for testing different innovative strategies and services in response to meeting local childcare needs.

CONCLUSION

Lille is engaged in a metropolisation process combining emblematic economic development projects based on technological investments, information and digital technologies, and support for entrepreneurship with important investments in welfare infrastructures in a

context of persistent urban disparities and social polarisation between residents of Lille as well as the municipalities that make up the Metropolitan area. The main innovation policy discourse and frameworks remain focused on economic development, research and technological innovations. Social innovation is an emerging concept in some institutional niches such as social and solidarity based economy new policy field.

Despite limited responsibilities in terms of welfare redistribution, with unemployment benefits, housing assistance and family allowances remaining in the national sphere, Lille municipality has taken significant action in WILCO policy fields, at least in the housing and childcare sectors. The municipality's commitment in the field of youth employment is much more complicated, since employment policies are a national responsibility and local authorities do not have much room for manoeuvre in the face of employment offices. However, the scope and expectations of the local urban renovation plan, creation of childcare services and places, and support for youth employment programmes depend on co-funding from the State, whose priorities and contributions varied during the last crisis period, causing a number of multi-level controversies.

There are no major divergences between political parties or with local civil societies on the main priorities in the WILCO policy fields. Improving opportunities for mothers to conciliate work and family thanks to the creation of new childcare places, building more housing, including ambitious social housing plans, and promoting social diversity in neighbourhoods are not subjects contested by local right-wing opposition.

Potentially contentious issues that can be identified are the efficiency of major economic development projects in creating job opportunities for residents of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, particularly young people, and the ambivalent impacts of urban renewal operations on the access of socially vulnerable households to affordable housing.

In a context of a shortage of social housing and childcare places, disputes are emerging concerning which categories of population should have priority of access. The left-wing majorities insist on improving access to social housing and childcare services for the most vulnerable (for instance, single parents), whereas some members of the opposition express doubt about the efficiency of such programmes on social diversity in a context of the departure of families and the middle class from the city centre. Electoral considerations tied to household compositions of the social mix are not absent from such political positioning. Others tensions relate to the metropolisation of social issues, especially in the housing sector. The geographical distribution of efforts for building social housing or for rebalancing social composition between the different municipalities of the metropolitan area is a source of political friction.

Local welfare debates are dominated by quantitative issues (“build more housing”, “creating new childcare places”). Qualitative and innovative actions exist but are positioned as secondary issues in the political agenda. Growing budget constraints tend to reposition governmental modes of support for socially innovative practices, with the coexistence of streamlining trend of local welfare policies that weakens existing social services and small-scale and temporary calls for innovative projects based on the political priorities of local institutions rather than grassroots' proposals. Although civil society organisations are often brought in as partners and funded as providers by local welfare policies, they no longer have the monopoly over social innovation discourse and initiatives. Some are resistant to the emerging integration of social innovation in certain local public action frameworks, within a context of restricted social spending and financial support for existing and useful social services.

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Policy makers

Audrey Linkedheld, Deputy and elected representative at the Municipal Council of Lille for housing policies (Socialist Party).

Lise Daleux, Elected at the Municipal Council, Vice-President to Childcare policy (Europe ecology Green).

Isabelle Maheu, Member of the municipal opposition (Union for Lille, Local Right wing coalition).

Civil Servants

Sebastien Thomas, Responsible of the Housing department of Lille.

Claire Bruhat, Director of the Housing department of Lille Metropolis.

Christian Haubold, Director childhood department of Lille.

Carole Everare, Member of Departmental Commission for Early years Childcare (North Departement).

Florence Houriez, Responsible of the Call for support innovative initiatives at the Local Family Allowance Office (CAF).

Carine Szymonial, Lille sector responsible, Local Family Allowance Office (CAF).

Civil society and non-for profit representatives

Philippe Deltombe, Predisent of Right to housing association ("Droit au logement") of the Region North-Pas de Calais.

Laurence Mérot, Coordinator of Colline/ACCEP an umbrella of parental initiatives in the field of childcare.

Claudine Renau, President of Innov Enfance, a non-for profit organisation delivering several childcare services in Lille Metropolis.

Local experts

Christian Laidebeur, Housing expert living in Lille, member housing program of the Foundation of France.

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