



**WILCO**

Welfare innovations  
at the local level  
in favour of cohesion

WORK PACKAGE 5

**SOCIAL INNOVATIONS IN LILLE, FRANCE**

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## 1. BACKGROUND OF THE SOCIAL INNOVATIONS

*An unequal distribution of responsibilities between national and local governments in the WILCO policy fields:*

Taking into consideration the three WILCO policy fields, multi-governance is the predominant situation with more or less shared responsibilities between national and local governments. However, we can clearly distinguish labour market policy where local authorities' room for action is quite limited. They can facilitate coordination between local employment public services with local enterprises and institutions or take a proactive role in the local implementation of national employment schemes. Although employment and professional integration do not fall directly under the authority of Lille municipality, the increasing unemployment rate and worsening living conditions of young people concern local policy makers and explain local political initiatives in this field. Conversely, housing is an explicit responsibility and one of Lille Metropolis' ambitious policy fields. Similarly, local childcare policy would not exist without municipal regulation, investment and provision of facilities. These unbalanced situations explain why we have decided to select and analyse innovative practices in the housing and childcare fields.

*Predominance of quantitative issues over qualitative and innovative actions:*

Taking into account municipal initiatives for reducing the growing youth unemployment rate, "building more" with the construction plan for 5,000 new dwellings per year in Lille Metropolis, creating new childcare places and optimizing existing places, political discourse and administrative recommendations focus above all on quantitative objectives and indicators. Qualitative and innovative actions are positioned as secondary issues but are not absent from the political agenda. The housing policy field is a good example. Beyond general objectives,<sup>1</sup> Lille Metropolis Local Housing Plan includes an innovative component named "experiments" in each of the main priorities. According to the municipal administration, the initiatives that could be assessed as innovative are: a focus on citizen participation with a call for projects on "participative habitat"<sup>2</sup>; a consensus conference<sup>3</sup> on housing launched in 2011; a renovation programme for private dwellings based on technical assistance for self-help renovation and mutual aid within groups of 8 to 10 owners; etc. But the local political arena for social innovation promotion and debate remains permanently weakened by attention paid primarily to a limited number of quantitative priorities, especially in times of economic crisis when budget cuts have entered into the public debate.

*Social innovations in the age of public spending restrictions:*

The childcare field illustrates existing tensions between local providers, local authorities and representatives of family policy in the ways innovative practices are promoted. In Lille, a multi-governance issue has emerged with the decrease of funding coming from the Family Allowance Office (CAF) during the negotiation of the next "contrat enfance-jeunesse" (early childcare contract). Supporting qualitative actions such as early childhood

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<sup>1</sup> "Build more", "Renovate old social housing areas and run-down private stock", "Promote social diversity (the social mix) with actions adapting dwellings for disabled and dependant elderly people, housing for students, intergenerational cohabitation and emergency and inclusion shelters", "Sustainable housing improvement of the energy efficiency of housing stock as well as experimenting with eco-districts".

<sup>2</sup> Gathering of inhabitants in order to think up and work together to build their future housing.

<sup>3</sup> 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 circulated widely.

centres or emergency home childcare services for low-income parents with atypical working hours is no longer a national priority in contrast to classical quantitative objectives of increasing and optimizing the number of places. Although considered as useful, initiatives supported a few years ago as innovative are now subject to reduced funding. Financial support from the municipality can be partial and temporary in a context marked by budget restrictions. Budget constraints lead to a selection process relating to innovations. *Parler Bambins*, one of the experiments analysed in the next chapter, is strongly supported by the municipality whereas the future of former initiatives is much more uncertain despite the recognition of the usefulness by elected representatives and technicians.

The public spending restriction period is going to reconfigure the funding method of social innovation. As qualitative actions are marginalized within the early childcare contract negotiated with Lille municipality, the local family office has launched a temporary call for innovative actions in childcare services. But the number of selected projects is quite limited (only one in Lille), with the funding presented as 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 of civil society monopoly over social innovation discourse and actions?*

Another interesting aspect is that social innovation is no longer the monopoly of organized civil society discourse and practice. Whereas in the 1990s not-for-profit organisations were considered key agents in innovative practices, they are now in competition with local authorities. In a similar way to participatory democracy, social innovation is progressively integrated into a new framework of local public action. Several initiatives presented in the report, such as *Parler Bambins* and support for housing self-renovation, have been launched by Lille Municipality or Lille Metropolis.

#### *Local policies dedicated to social and solidarity-based economy (SSE) - a window of opportunity for social innovation:*

The main innovation policy frameworks remain related to economic development, research and technological investment, information technology, support to entrepreneurship, etc. Stimulation of innovation is, for instance, included in Lille Metropolis' economic development agenda with specific programmes such as *Pôles de compétitivité* (competitiveness clusters), industries and sectors of excellence, etc.

However, social innovation is not absent from local political discourse. It is, in particular, a key concept used in the description of the social and solidarity-based plan developed by Lille Metropolis. Social innovation 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.) It is also associated with Lille Metropolis' economic development initiatives and programmes.

At a time when rhetoric and budgets of innovation are monopolised by competitiveness and reindustrialization development objectives and strategies, new fields of public action such as SSE local policies constitute a window of opportunity for testing different innovative strategies and services in response to meeting local needs.

## 2. EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL INNOVATIONS

### 2.1. Ilot Stephenson - Co-production of housing in a major urban renewal district in Lille Metropolis (Tourcoing-Roubaix-Wattrelot)

*Union* is the name of one of the biggest urban renewal projects in the Roubaix-Tourcoing-Wattrelot district (Lille Metropolis). In a post-industrial site spreading across 80 hectares, a large project has been planned combining an eco-neighbourhood, a business hub and new housing, including 30% of social housing. In a district called Ilot Stephenson at the periphery of this area, a protest on the part of the inhabitants against the demolition of their popular housing led to an innovative housing co-production action between architects, local authorities and an inhabitants' organisation. Access to 30 homes at reduced cost has been achieved thanks to an innovative mode of architectural intervention that encourages inhabitants' participation in the self-rehabilitation of their neighbourhood. This emblematic initiative has inspired and been integrated into the broader participative governance process concerning one of the most ambitious urban renewal projects in northern France.

The background to this innovation is the period of urban policies characterized in the 2000s by a vast national programme of urban renewal targeting deprived districts. The Ilot Stephenson initiative could be considered as a pilot project contributing to testing out alternative ways of conceiving urban renewal operations. *Construisons ensemble, le grand ensemble* (Working together to build the whole urban area) is the concept launched by the architect Patrick Bouchain and his colleagues which has been tested out between 2009 and 2012.

The story of the Ilot Stephenson neighbourhood started with a conflict at the beginning of the 2000s when the inhabitants of this small working-class neighbourhood located at the periphery of the Union urban renewal project learnt that their houses would be purchased by the municipality and then demolished. They organised themselves into an organisation named *Rase pas mon quartier* (Don't demolish my neighbourhood) and initiated actions protesting against the project with some support from various elected opposition members.

After several years, they succeeded in stopping the demolition project in 2004. In 2007, the Lille Metropolis authorities decided to transfer the management of the whole Union urban renewal development to the semi-public company, SEM Ville Renouvelée, with an obligation to properly integrate sustainable development and participatory approaches. After three years during which nothing happened, the Ilot Stephenson project was the first operation launched in an atmosphere of mutual mistrust between inhabitants and urban planners. The mayor of Tourcoing and SEM Ville Renouvelée decided to call on architect Patrick Bouchain and his team to rethink the urban project with the inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

#### 2.1.1. Types of services and ways of addressing users

After a contentious phase, new ways of addressing inhabitants of the Stephenson neighbourhood emerged, comprising several innovative aspects. Conceptually, the building site was no longer considered as a no man's land and a temporary phase in the life of the neighbourhood but as a living episode for the inhabitants. The architects immersed themselves in the neighbourhood by locating part of their office in an old electronics workshop. This daily presence changed relationships with inhabitants and other stakeholders. They knew whom to contact for any daily issues on the building site. Conversely, the immersion changed the architects' perceptions of the initial architectural

scheme by bringing it up against the habits and needs of everyday life. Moreover, the electronics workshop was also transformed into a public space where a large model of the urban project was reconstructed for the inhabitants. Several meetings with residents, elected representatives, technicians from local authorities and representatives of local organisations were organised for presenting and discussing adaptation of the initial plan. Finally, regular workshops and conferences were organised in the electronics workshop bringing together the current and future inhabitants and exploring topics such as making compost or recovering wastewater. Educational activities were also planned with children.

The new approach to the urban renewal project led to concrete and substantive results:

- the shift from a contentious atmosphere between inhabitants and local authorities to a collaborative period;
- the rehabilitation of 30 historical houses and the improvement of 24 inhabited houses.
- the public exhibition and discussion of the large-scale model led to a change in the initial architectural proposal.
- the construction of the first model of renewed housing that the residents agreed on was visited by present and future inhabitants. The idea was to meet and involve future residents in the district before they moved in.

Despite undeniable achievements, several factors limiting inhabitants' participation and commitment can be underlined. The mix between former and new residents has not happened to the extent expected because of the difference between generations. Newcomers are often young families with small children whereas former residents are mainly elderly people. In addition, the positive participation in the renewal project seems not to have generated, for the moment, new inhabitants' organisations and projects after the end of the building phase.

The Ilot Stephenson project has also inspired and strengthened the participatory approach adopted by semi-public company SEM Ville Renouvelée in implementing the eco-neighbourhood. Factors include the co-production of a sustainable development framework. Its formulation has not only involved the different local authorities and housing developers, but also groups of local non-profit organisations named "Union will not happen without us". This group of local organisations demanded, from the beginning of the Union urban renewal plan, integration of employment, social and ecological aspects alongside the initial business and construction dimensions. The framework for the eco-neighbourhood adopted in 2007 is a progressive process, revised every four years in order to adjust to new needs expressed by local actors, local institutions' strategies and national legislation. Moreover, a charter of participation was drawn up with the different Union stakeholders. The active involvement of the group of local organizations led to the creation of a specific fund for resident participation by the local authorities in order to support local initiatives connected to the renewal urban project.

### *2.1.2. Internal organisation and working methods*

As already underlined, the Ilot Stephenson project is a new architectural and urban planning experiment conceptualised by Patrick Bouchain and his architects' firm, *Construire*. They are part of the architectural movement that believes that building cities should not only be a matter for specialists (architects, urban planners, property developers, social landlords, etc.) and that inhabitants should not be passive subjects who are generally excluded from most social housing, construction and urban renewal projects. "Building is living" means that the building phase is no longer considered a parenthesis in inhabitants' lives, but an important opportunity for public expression and civic

participation. Concretely, as the Stephenson project has demonstrated, opening a building site involves:

- the temporary establishment of at least one architect in the neighbourhood during the building phase;
- the permanent participation of present and future inhabitants and other stakeholders (elected representatives, social landlords, urban planners, local not-for-profit organisations, etc.) from initial design to completion of the building;
- the creation of a special meeting place at the building venue where inhabitants can talk with architects, where the different stakeholders can discuss the projects and follow the achievements, and where activities are organized with the local and future community;
- the programming of cultural events in partnership with local artists and cultural facilities.
- the contribution of students from Tourcoing Beaux Arts School who created a temporary art performance within the houses under renovation.

It is worth noting that the contract mechanism used for this experiment is also unusual for this kind of urban operation. Whereas local authorities usually turn to public procurement for urban planning projects, this was a partnership agreement (*“convention de partenariat”*) which provided the contractual frame between the architects’ firm and SEM Ville Renouvelée. How such a tailor-made project could fit in with the specifications of traditional public tendering remains an open question.

At the urban planners’ level, the main change in working methods has been the 2007 creation of a new statute of technician in charge of sustainable development and inhabitants’ participation, introduced when management of the urban renewal project was transferred to SEM Ville Renouvelée. It is presented as an innovation in a professional milieu dominated by architects and urban planners who are not used to and do not know how to work with groups of inhabitants, local organisations and neighbourhood councils. Urban planners have learnt to systematically present and discuss the urban project with residents within the different neighbourhood councils as well as on ad-hoc committees.

### *2.1.3. Embeddedness of the project in the local welfare system*

The Ilot Stephenson story has profoundly influenced the Tourcoing mayor, urban planners from SEM Ville Renouvelée and Lille Metropolis and other stakeholders in the project. It has definitely led to the integration of a human and participatory dimension in urban planning and urban renewal projects. According to the architects, even partially questioning the plan for a large and emblematic urban renewal project already voted by the local authorities’ remains quite rare. They are planning to publish a book in 2013 that will conceptualize and illustrate a new urban approach to social housing construction and urban rehabilitation. In addition, Marie Blanckaert, the architect who worked in the Stephenson’ neighbourhood throughout the entire project, won a prize for young urban planners in 2012.

The Ilot Stephenson project has been subject to local publicity and media coverage with a special website and numerous articles in the regional press. The inhabitants’ organisation was often solicited by journalists. Stephenson has gradually become a kind of showcase project with all the risks of overexposure in terms of expectations created. Whereas the Ilot Stephenson was a local political problem at the beginning of the 2000s, ten years on it has become an emblematic success promoted by the local authorities. Feedback on the project goes far beyond the local community. Many professors and students of architectural schools, delegations of technicians from other cities and even international



visitors from Brazil, England and Brazil have been to visit the building site and met the architects and urban planning team.

## 2.2. Support for housing self-renovation in Lille Metropolis

Within the scope of its second Local Housing Plan (PLMH2, 2008-2012), Lille Metropolis chose to provide support for self-renovation at the beginning of 2011. This experiment is one of the actions contributing to the fight against poor quality and substandard housing (“*lutte contre le mal logement*”) but also against fuel poverty, especially for low-income residents of run-down private housing stock. After a call for projects, the proposal from the non-profit organisation *Les compagnons bâtisseurs* (Companion Builders), was selected for managing, training and supervising the implementation of a self-renovation process in a region where such practices remain marginal and unprofessional. After a first phase of information and exploration in 2011, three volunteer local housing organisations (GRAAL, APU Wazemmes and PACT MN) were recruited for implementing the project in three different areas in Lille Metropolis.

This innovation is interesting because it concerns the transfer and reproduction of self-renovation practices, seen as socially innovative by local authorities. In other words, this is not an institutionalised process of local bottom-up practices based on the skills and demands of local actors. According to promoters of self-renovation, this is the first time in France that a large metropolis like Lille has included an action of this kind in its housing policy. This sign of public recognition and support of self-renovation implies a method based on the identification and transfer of skills and knowledge to local practitioners adapted to the local housing context.

Support for self-renovation covers a set of practices that aim at improving the living conditions of low-income households by renovating their homes with their active participation. It combines dual objectives and functions. In addition to the material maintenance and renovation facilitated by technical support, self-renovation is also expected to have positive impacts on social inclusion and empowerment of families. This relatively old practice has been the object of renewed interest in recent years in the face of increasing issues of substandard and run-down housing as well as the rise in energy bills for modest households living with fuel poverty.

### 2.2.1 Types of services and ways of addressing users

In comparison with other cities, a feature specific to Lille Metropolis is that most self-help renovation has targeted owners and tenants in run-down private dwellings rather than residents of social housing stock. This institutional demand was confirmed in the diagnosis phase and can be explained by the high number of substandard dwellings that form part of the major stock of old working-class houses in the Nord region. Another specificity is the high numbers of owners in comparison to tenants benefiting from the first phase of the experiment, which can be explained by the financial incentive provided by the agency for housing improvement and Lille Metropolis. However, whether owners or tenants, the users targeted could not afford to carry out improvements on their run-down homes by themselves. In addition to insufficient income, the beneficiaries were experiencing different personal, professional and social difficulties (unemployment or an insecure job, family breakups, social isolation, etc.).

Concretely, the types of services provided to users are:

- a technical and social diagnosis on housing improvements and household living conditions;



- administrative support for the establishment of the application of diverse funding including support from the National Agency for Housing Improvement (ANAH);
- mediation between tenants and owners on the repair and maintenance works to be performed and paid for. The presence of a third party is often a factor in easing conflicts;
- educational and technical support to the members of family involved in concrete renovation tasks;
- some collective and technical training sessions were also provided to families on topics such as plumbing, insulation, tenants' rights, energy savings, etc.;
- potential direction towards other social services and housing benefits.

The principle of support for self-renovation is that renovation works are carried out by at least one member of the household with the support of a technical adviser and in some cases by a self-help network (other family members, friends, neighbours or other volunteer beneficiaries of the programme). This experiment is based on major involvement of the users over a period of time. The users' involvement is not considered as free but is subject to financial accountability in order to give value to this contribution.

A year and a half after the launch of this experiment 49 people have been referred to the three volunteer organisations for the experiment, mainly by non-profit housing organisations and social workers at local housing improvement institutions. Only 11 buildings have been launched due to the time required (about 5 to 6 months) for compiling the technical file and obtaining funding agreement. But according to the director of the GRAAL, one of the three organisations, the demand is growing with, for instance, 20 renovation projects planned. The users are mainly introduced by social workers, neighbourhood and housing organisations. Word of mouth is also starting to work as well as direct calls from households that have seen advertisements by Lille Metropolis or the General Council of the Nord Department.

The main and visible outcome is the maintenance and improvement of housing such as glazing, painting, minor plumbing, insulation, replacement of switches, plugs or light bulbs, ventilation, etc. All these improvements also have a positive impact by reducing obligatory expenses, such as energy expenditure. Beyond the visible housing improvement and financial gains, the promoters of support for self-renovation insist on the social impacts for the household. Self-renovating one's own apartment has a strong impact on personal self-esteem and progressive awareness of one's own capabilities. Some users rediscover the pleasure of taking care of their home and develop basic handiwork skills. Moreover, the renovation period can also be an opportunity for socialisation, with the mobilisation of personal or family networks focused on a concrete project but also sometimes with meetings of volunteers. Compared to external maintenance, self-renovation is also seen by owners as well as social landlords as a guarantee against rapid deterioration because works have been carried out by tenants.

Convincing families to commit themselves to the housing self-renovation method is the first obstacle to overcome because this practice is still unfamiliar, takes time and often leads to more comprehensive housing improvements than those initially projected by the household. Convincing arguments for the benefits of self-renovation are cost reduction for the families, the quality of work done at official standards as well as the energy and financial savings. Although users have priority of access to financial support from housing programmes, a minimum of self-funding is required which could exclude the very poorest or indebted households.

### 2.2.2. Internal organisation and working methods

The self-renovation team is generally composed of three people:

- an administrative and project coordinator who contacts, negotiates and draws up the contract with owners and tenants as well as prepares applications to housing institutions for funding;
- a technical advisor who technically diagnoses the restoration works, advises and supports the household in the renovation of their home and negotiates materials or minor interventions by external tradespeople;
- a volunteer involved as a civic participant and in professional training processes. Her/his role focuses much more on the relationship with families.

The first part of the experiment included several training sessions with the local operational teams because there were no organizations qualified to support self-help renovation in Lille Metropolis. Here we can identify a clear process of transfer and adaptation of skills and expertise coming from outside the experiment's area. Training consisted in particular of a two-month immersion session for future technical and social advisers with experienced technicians from *Les compagnons bâtisseurs* working in other cities (Marseille, Rennes).

The profile of the technical advisor is particularly specific and quite rare because it combines technical skills from different building trades with educational and social interventions similar to social workers. These dual skills make it more difficult to recruit technical advisers, taking into account that the wages provided remain attractive in relation to the responsibilities required. This explains why technical advisers present atypical career paths, with engineers who have the choice of moving into the social profession or social workers who want to get away from administrative and work routines. But the requirements for such work could be a future obstacle for answering the growing demand for self-renovation.

### 2.2.3. Embeddedness of the project in the local welfare system

One of the *Les compagnons bâtisseurs*' tasks has been to inform and convince a large number of stakeholders in the housing sector of the usefulness of support for the self-renovation method. Beyond overcoming potential indifference or sceptical viewpoints, the objective is to build a network of institutional partners able to direct potential beneficiaries towards this kind of solution. This means that social workers, non-profit housing organisations and local authorities need to assess if support for self-renovation meets the needs of the families they are used to advising. The process has culminated in the creation of a local committee for guiding and assisting potential users.

Another key component in the reproduction of self-renovation methods in other urban contexts consists of preventing potential conflicts and regulating relations with building tradespeople as well as small- and medium-sized construction companies. The fear of unfair competition, especially in a time of building and housing crisis, is a frequent objection expressed by trade organisations. To prevent it, the head of *Les compagnons bâtisseurs* generally points out that self-renovation is not a market because the families involved are usually low-income households.

As already noted, this initiative is a top-down experiment originating in an institutional demand from Lille Metropolis rather than inhabitants or local not-for-profit housing organisations. To a certain extent, institutional recognition comes before the emergence of professional organisations, skilled workers and active promoters. A first issue in the

transfer is the integration of support for self-renovation within the objectives and frameworks of local authorities and housing institutions other than Lille Metropolis. The General Council of the Nord region and the family allowance office have already become funding partners. The ability to finance support for self-renovation on a larger scale remains an open question. In the event of growing demand, the extension of the experiment to social landlords is another challenge. The second main issue is the emergence of local leaders as well as active and competent organisations able to promote and disseminate such practices once *Les compagnons bâtisseurs*' work ends.

In conclusion, we would like to underline that the experience in Lille Metropolis could represent an important step forward in a context characterised by the absence of national self-renovation programmes. Lille Metropolis explicitly included support for self-renovation in its housing policy, whereas such practices have tended to be supported within social policies (family support, inclusion pathways, community development programmes) in other urban contexts. The Lille experiment is even more likely to positively influence the national political agenda given that the present deputy in charge of the future housing law is a former municipal councillor for housing in Lille and is very familiar with the housing organisations involved in support for self-renovation projects.

### 2.3. Parler Bambins - Toddler Talk

*Parler Bambins* is a prevention programme for early language development for children aged 3 to 36 months attending childcare facilities. Developed by Dr Michel Zorman and his research team in an educational and cognitive sciences centre, it was first experimented during the period 2005-2008 in several day nurseries located in deprived neighbourhoods in the city of Grenoble. The first results, on the basis of individual language psychometric tests, demonstrated significant progress in the language of the children who benefited from the programme. Convinced by this method, the elected councillor for childcare policy for Lille decided to launch an experiment in two childcare facilities in September 2011. After one year, the programme has been disseminated to eight other municipal day-care facilities starting in 2012.

Like in Grenoble, the broad objective of the programme is the reduction of social inequalities. Recent studies on the factors influencing educational inequalities underline that differences in language skills are strongly related to social and cultural differences, starting at an early age with an impact on future educational performances. Providing all children equally with early opportunities for the development of language is presented as a way of preventing future school failures. This is why the implementation of the *Parler Bambins* programme targets childcare facilities first and foremost, including children from disadvantaged and foreign-born families.

The innovative aspects are mainly educational and based on new kinds of language interactions between professionals, children and their parents. The objectives are to create a favourable environment for communication with children by multiplying opportunities for conversations. The programme is based on three actions:

- Daily interactions with children. This involves taking advantage of every opportunity in the day for communicating individually with each child using an adaptive and personal approach.
- Communication with the parents based on discussions of the programme, the child's language acquisition and her/his development. This parent-based action aims at building the parents' trust and support and disseminating the practices at home.

- A language workshop targeting the children who speak a little with the aim of stimulating expression and the pleasure of communication with the support of books, pictures or toys.

### 2.3.1. *Types of services and ways of addressing users*

Exploring in far more detail the ways professionals address children implies starting with the usual communication practices in daycare facilities. Professionals tend to talk collectively to children rather than individually, speaking in the imperative mood, asking questions that require a simple yes or no answer and formulating questions and answers at the same time. If these unconscious modes of expression have the advantage of helping to manage large groups of children, the disadvantage lies in not focusing attention on quiet children who do not express themselves much. These isolated children tend to fall behind the others in their language development. The *Parler Bambins* programme helps childcare workers to change their professional practices, which concretely means to stop talking in a neutral or general way to children but to address each of them personally by their own name, formulating open questions and allowing time for the shyest to answer in order to stimulate communication.

According to professionals who used this method, one of the advantages lies in the rapid and positive changes in the children's behaviour. These new ways of speaking to the children make it easier to capture the attention of introverted children who tend to play alone. Communication often starts with the body and gestural language used by children to show what they want. These more frequent interactions lead progressively to children pronouncing a few words in a second stage. The workshop with a small group of the shyest children is based on fun and pleasure. None of the children refuse to participate. On the contrary, after the first few sessions, the children express themselves and dare to ask to go to the workshop.

*Parler Bambins* also influences ways of addressing parents. Cooperation between professionals and parents is a key component in the success of the method. Firstly, they are informed about it as soon as they register their child at the crèche. Secondly, language development in the day care centre as at home becomes a subject of discussion with the professional that is as important as issues such as health, food, sleeping and so on. Parents are generally motivated and rarely reluctant to take part in the programme. Sometimes the programme helps to relieve illiterate or non-native speaking parents and make problematic relationships with reading less of a major issue. Because communication with the child is based less on reading stories and more on picking out words from a picture, the relationship with books can become positive and an educational tool at home. Some parents develop a relationship of trust and can talk about their fears about learning to speak and read.

### 2.3.2. *Internal organisation and working methods*

As already noted, *Parler Bambins* changes the ways the childcare workers speak and communicate with children. At the beginning of the programme, certain professionals expressed some reluctance. Once these fears were eased, programmes had globally positive effects on professional practices. They are generally motivated by the programme, which is presented as complementary to other skills. Their personal investment in language techniques consists of a training session of one to two days combining the conceptual presentation of the programme by one of the researchers and practices with children. The two first day nursery directors have been qualified and are now local representatives playing a supervisory role. *Parler Bambins* generally creates a positive team dynamic centring on this collaborative project.

An unexpected effect for the two directors first involved in the experiment has been the particular interest shown in this initiative, with growing media coverage leading to numerous requests. They find themselves in the position of meeting the Minister for the Family or being interviewed by journalists, which is gratifying.

### 2.3.3. *Embeddedness of the project in the local welfare system*

The experiment of the *Parler Bambins* springs more from the consequences of the meeting between the strong convictions of two elected municipal councillors, respectively in charge of childcare and the eradication of illiteracy, and the motivation of a number of early childhood workers. Following on from Grenoble, Lille and Rennes are part of the second wave of cities testing out the *Parler Bambins* framework. Originating in a strong political will to take action, *Parler Bambins* has been integrated in the municipal agenda through one of the actions of what is known as the global educational project. It is interesting to note that the support is partially financed by the childcare budget despite a context of limited spending for qualitative and innovative childcare initiatives. Moreover, the programme is not funded by the family allowance office, which did not select it from among the proposals received for the call for innovative projects in 2012. This partial but progressive integration of *Parler Bambins* within local childcare policies can also be illustrated by the fact that only municipal services are part of the experiment, which does not concern non-for profit private providers.

Different channels of dissemination can be identified:

- scientific communication of the results through academic articles but also professional reviews<sup>4</sup> for presenting the programme and the first results;
- popularisation of research findings through conferences<sup>5</sup>, training sessions for professionals, an official website<sup>6</sup> and a short film produced by Lille municipality;
- a political interest through networks of elected local representatives that encourage new cities (Lille and Rennes) to apply to join the experiment. A film has been projected to local authorities and institutions (General Council, the family allowance office) in charge of childcare and education issues. Recently, *Parler Bambins* reached a broader audience with the visit to Lille of the Minister for the Family, Dominique Bertinotti<sup>7</sup> in the context of the national childcare and parenthood consultation process;
- growing media coverage with articles in the local press<sup>8</sup> initially but also a television report on a national channel.

Another indicator of the dissemination process is that the two directors representing *Parler Bambins* to professional organisations cannot meet all the growing demand for presentations coming from other diverse childcare services or educational organisations and federations. They lack the time and resources to disseminate the programme beyond the municipal day care facilities, which remain the municipality's current priority.

Finally, it is interesting to note that some professionals, childcare educators and speech therapists have taken a critical stance towards the new programme. Their concern is the

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, an article in *Les métiers de la petite enfance*.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, the conference *Langages et réussite éducative : des actions innovantes* [Educational language and success: innovative actions], March 2009.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.parler-bambin.fr/>

<sup>7</sup> Dominique Bertinotti's visit to Lille, Friday 7 December 2012, <http://www.social-sante.gouv.fr/actualite-presse,42/invitations-presse,2339/deplacement-de-dominique,15436.html>.

<sup>8</sup> *Les crèches expérimentent le « parler bambins »*, Nord Eclair, 11 November 2011.



risk of stigmatisation and categorisation for some children diagnosed too young as having language development deficiencies. Thus the national federation of early childhood educators<sup>9</sup> expressed doubts as to the opportunity of applying *Parler Bambins* as a national programme, since it is seen as similar to early detection practices targeting specific children and families. These concerns can partially be interpreted as the result of a major polemic about a controversial programme on the detection of at-risk behaviour at an early age proposed by the previous government.

#### 2.4. Children's Café - *Potes en Ciel*

The children café, *Potes en Ciel*, is a welcoming and open place for children aged 0 to 16 as well as their parents living in the neighbourhood and nearby or wishing to meet other families and share experiences. The café is a meeting place that promotes children's well-being, good parent-child relationships, socialisation and mutual aid between families and generations by developing free creative and participatory learning activities. Educational and recreational actions are organised, such as parent-child workshops (music, visual arts, etc.), creative and cultural exchanges, book loans and festive and neighbourhood events. On the café side, non-alcoholic refreshments and snacks are served.

The *Potes en Ciel* café was set up by 10 founding members in 2006 in a working-class neighbourhood of Lille named Fives. This non-for profit initiative was inspired by the pioneering and similar experience of Café Zoïde, set up in Paris in 1999. *Potes en Ciel* is therefore also part of the dissemination process of the children's café concept within several large cities in France (Lyon, Nantes, etc.) but also in other European countries. A national then European network was created in 2011 with a common charter based on shared values such as affirmation of children's rights, learning citizenship, mutual aid and cooperation, the fight against discrimination and rejection of violence.

The *Potes en Ciel* café is not a traditional childcare service in the sense that professionals do not have to manage access and availability of places according to criteria defined by local childcare institutions and funders. The main objective is not to facilitate work and care conciliation of working parents, since the activities provided suppose a co-presence of the child with the parent. The café is open over the week-end, which is also perceived as innovative in terms of opening hours considering that most childcare facilities and municipal recreational centres tend to be closed.

##### 2.4.1. Types of services and ways of addressing users

The children's café had a membership of 356 in 2012 and registered 4,366 visits per year (27 people a day on average). After a strong progression over the first four years, the number of members has slightly decreased and has now stabilized. About 30 volunteers have participated in the project. The composition of users is important and subject to debate because the social mix of families is one of the stated objectives of the *Potes en Ciel* café. We can distinguish different motivations and profiles among the parents. A first group is composed of young parents who have recently moved to the Fives neighbourhood. The café is viewed as a place for socialisation, a friendly way to meet other parents and establish good neighbourly relations. For some parents, going to the café fits with educational preferences or work and care balance choices. It is in line with parents' choice to spend time with their young children in a creative and user-friendly atmosphere.

For parents, the café also corresponds to an educational approach perceived by some parents as more adapted to children's rhythm and development than a traditional pre-

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.fneje.fr/spip.php?page=news>

school framework. Parents and children reproduce the creative activities they share in the café at home. In this sense, visual arts and children's singing workshops are also a learning process for both parents and children. The educational motivation can also be identified through the high number of users coming from other Lille Metropolis districts. More than 50% of users come from outside the neighbourhood on Wednesday or during the week-end. The café is seen as a unique place in the region in terms of sharing creative activities and parent-children participation. An interesting point is also the way the café can support divorced and separated parents, in particular fathers who have custody of children at the week-end. For them, the café helps to build a qualitative relationship between the children and their fathers which improves their care and educational capabilities. Finally, child-minders are another group of users who come during the week. For them, the café is a collective place that provides a socialisation space with other children and leisure activities that they cannot provide at home.

The social mix of users was one of the initial objectives behind setting up the café in a working-class neighbourhood. However, the diversity of users' social origins has not yet met the board's initial expectations. The cultural barriers to knowledge of the café, such as parental participation, could partially explain this situation. In order to avoid the risk of social homogenisation, volunteers and professionals have decided over recent years to adopt a proactive approach by building partnerships with a young single mothers centre and non-for-profit organisations such as ATD Fourth-World. Parents and professionals organise activities out of the café and meet parents in other places in the neighbourhood. The choice has been made to welcome families in difficulties with the assistance of social workers as a first step during the time needed for parents to gain confidence and autonomy before trying to come on their own. Although the cost, 1 euro per child, is cheap compared to private and for-profit leisure activities for young children, access to the café is now free for very low-income families.

#### *2.4.2. Internal organisation and working methods*

Whereas the types of activities and forms of parental participation are clearly innovative, the working methods are also interesting, though sometimes problematic. In addition to their participation in creative and leisure activities, parents are involved as volunteers in the working organisation with tasks such as opening the café in the morning, welcoming new parents and children, serving at the bar, developing the website and so on. Volunteers and staff work hand and hand on reception functions and welcoming parents to the café, which is presented as fundamental. Volunteers are not always parents and users but also people from the neighbourhood who support the project. Professionals, parents and representatives of institutions regard this strong involvement of volunteers and users as innovative in comparison with traditional childcare facilities, where professionals tend to keep parents at a distance. In addition, the participation of parents fosters flexibility and adjustments to activities according to user demands. For instance, the staff organise picnic lunches as a convivial moment with parents for informal discussion of educational issues.

However, the close relationship between workers and users can sometimes be problematic and has still not been formally stabilised. Because parents are involved in running key activities proposed by the staff, some professionals are sometimes subject to harsh criticism by parents in the way they facilitate workshops. Because of the friendly and participative atmosphere, the respective responsibilities between professionals and users are sometimes unclear. Moreover, the staff have to manage specific demands from child-minders asking for personal advice or problematic situations with certain parents (from the Rom community, for instance). The special attention given to individual cases can cause tensions with the collective dynamic.



With the almost complete renewal of the staff, the *Potes en Ciel* café is in the process of clarifying its working methods in line with the classical path taken by voluntary organisations. The first workers team, and in particular the manager, were among the founders of the project. This dual role (professional and promoter) was creative during the emergence phase of the project. It seems to have become problematic in the development phase when fundraising imperatives arose along with the first management tensions between staff, board and users. The personal involvement of the new generation of workers in the project is less pronounced. For many of them, working at the café is a job first and foremost. In addition, the insecure job status (fixed term contracts, subsidized jobs, etc.) that applies to some young workers does not facilitate long-term investment.

This development has led to a process of clarification and formalisation of the respective roles and statutes of board members, users and workers. The new coordinator was recruited to manage the professional staff without which the café could no longer operate. There has been a major turnover in staff over recent years. The café is staffed by a significant number of temporary workers, trainees and students, making it complicated to create a stable professional team. Partially offset by the involvement of volunteers, human resources management is actually the weakest part of this initiative.

#### 2.4.3. *Embeddedness of the project in the local welfare system*

The role played by the *Potes en Ciel* café in local governance is interesting. As with many innovative projects, integration within the local welfare system has not been immediate and met some resistance at the beginning. *Potes en Ciel* is not a municipal initiative and does not lie within the traditional scope of community skills. Also, recognition by the political and administrative sphere has been progressive and a little controversial. Initially supported by the elected municipal representative (Green party) for the social and solidarity-based economy, the project met with scepticism from the elected official (Communist party) from the Fives district and civil servants in charge of urban community development. They were reluctant to invest in an initiative perceived as a boho concept, targeting middle class newcomers and contributing to the gentrification process of a working-class neighbourhood. This partly explains the difficulties of finding a role for the café. In addition, as already underlined, the café is neither a traditional childcare facility nor a leisure activity, in view of the co-presence of parents and children. It therefore takes time to convince municipalities and local institutions to find the corresponding budget lines for financial support.

### 2.5. Early childhood centre in Faubourg de Bethune

Lille has supported the implementation of early childhood centres, especially in popular neighbourhoods. These early childhood centres are multi-stakeholder, multi-service facilities, which create networks and pathways between professionals, childcare services, and institutions. It is a local way for governing the diversification of facilities at the neighbourhood level, and preventing the social polarisation of services. Such services work thanks to local childcare coordinators, a new profession. Moreover, these kinds of centres provide a lively space for parents and children with temporary and permanent information, special events, and activities embedded in the neighbourhood.

This case study focuses on the Childhood centre *Halte-garderie doux calins* (Tender loving part-time childcare centre) in the Faubourg de Béthune district. Our choice is justified by the fact that this service is located in one of the most popular and precarious districts in Lille, the pioneering and original nature of certain experimentations, and also the difficulties encountered in the attempt to consolidate and generalise these experiments.

The Faubourg de Béthune Childhood centre was founded at the end of the 1990s. In the same place, it groups together a part-time childcare centre (“Halte-garderie”), maternal and infant health and care protection centre (*Protection Maternelle et Infantile*), a child-minder centre (*Relais assistants maternelles*), a recreation centre, and a games library. The *Doux calins* (Tender loving) part-time childcare centre is an association created at the beginning of the 1990s following the observations made by local government representatives and various professionals of the educational difficulties faced by many single mothers, and the lack of any activity centre for young children in this district. Each year, it provides 20 hours of childcare services per week for the children of 145 to 150 families (including 35 single-parent families in 2009), which still seems to be inadequate since there were 86 families on the waiting list in 2011. The request to create a multi-childcare facility (combining part-time and full-time childcare facilities) has been on hold for several years due to a lack of funding.

The Béthune district is a disadvantaged residential district in the south-western part of Lille, a city with a population of 232,432 inhabitants. It is an urban tax-free zone, where 77% of the housing units are social housing. The unemployment rate in this district exceeds 30%, and there is a high proportion of immigrants. Together with Moulins, this is one of the districts in which there is the highest number of single-parent families with nearly 40% of children living with a single parent (ABS, p.18, 23, 2006). 37% of the children live in a poor household (900 euros per month in 2006, ABS p.26). Nearly 30% of the children in the part-time and full-time childcare centres are from single-parent families.

#### 2.5.1. Types of services and ways of addressing users

As of its creation, the project of the *Doux calins* part-time childcare centre was to involve parents in the district in its management and in leading activities. Different types of participation can be identified: 1) participation on the Board of Directors and as officers of the association; 2) participation in preparing and leading activities such as outings, and parties; 3) meeting with families and listening to their concerns. This participation is generally beneficial to the parents who get involved. When mothers organise activities, they gain self-esteem and confidence in their personal capacities. For several of them, this responsibility was a step toward finding a new job. Nonetheless, several of the people interviewed stressed that there were more and more obstacles preventing parent participation. Besides the fact that it is a short-term involvement (one to two years), linked to the age of their children, participating in managing the whole budget of an association is not always easy for parents who often live with limited financial resources. More generally speaking, parents seem to have less time available to devote to collective activities than a few years ago. Childcare professionals have observed that single mothers are often overwhelmed with time constraints (a combination of family, work and administrative issues) that make them less available.

Many of the parents are in a precarious professional situation (unemployed, completing training, or with a government subsidised job). Childcare often permits single mothers, who are in the national priority group, to complete training, look for a job, or work part-time. Since parents regularly confide in the childcare professionals about diverse personal issues, the part-time childcare centres also play a role in orienting them toward appropriate employment services, social services, and associations in the district.

Parenting support is a priority in both the part-time and the full-time childcare centres. Childcare professionals agree that there are definite educational challenges. Children lack points of reference, and parents lack authority, but there are also language problems in immigrant families in which French is not always well spoken. Early childhood centre (ECC) professionals take turns co-organising regular workshops with the parents. Along with the

*Arpège* association, the ECC organises coffee breaks at the pre-schools in the morning. These are informal meetings with the parents who are so inclined. They facilitate contact with parents who are sometimes reticent about participating in formal meetings organised in social institutions. This type of initiative is part of a combined reflection on the difficulties involved in touching certain parents who do not go to the social centre or games library very often. These parenting activities have also helped bring about *more* significant involvement of fathers of immigrant origins who are more present and participate more in literacy activities organised at the social centre.

The Béthune ECC along with its partners has created an experimental welcome booklet for families and professionals, which includes information on all the early childhood services and associations in the district as well as a way to monitor contacts with the various professionals. If this initial booklet proves to be successful, it will be further developed in the future

### *2.5.2. Internal organisation and working methods*

The ECC is lucky to have two people taking care of its daily operations: A receptionist, who informs and orients parents toward different services and organisations, and a coordinator and activities leader, who builds synergy between member organisations and helps put together common projects. It is worth noting that the Béthune ECC is the only one in Lille where there is a coordinator in addition to a receptionist. The presence in the same place of a variety of services makes it easier to guide families, to help them visit the appropriate services and meet with the right professionals, to organise common events such as the tale festival, and to resolve informal problems. The Béthune ECC was the model used by City Hall, the local General Council and Family Allowance Office to draw up a charter for early childhood centres in Lille.

Grouping together several services and organisations in the same place also enables professional services to be mutualized. For example, an occupational therapist has been working with the children at the ECC for many years. Likewise, all of the professionals in all of the services participated in a quarterly meeting with a child psychiatrist, who is a professor at the University of Lyon, to exchange their experiences about the concrete difficulties encountered by the professionals with the families. In addition, the ECC enables cross-disciplinary professional training to be organised, which is open to employees from all its member organisations. One such example is a music appreciation class.

Having observed that many parents were enrolling their children in pre-school at an earlier and earlier age (before they turned 3), the Director of the part-time child care centre (*Halte-garderie Doux Calins*) ran a survey on the expectations of professionals and parents. A need for parenting support for the transition between the childcare centre and the national pre-school led to the setting up in 2003 of preparatory half-days for children with their parents at the pre-school. Through dialogue with professionals, a progressive calendar for integrating these children was established, which takes into account the behaviour and the maturity of the children who are less than 3.

### *2.5.3. Embeddedness of the project in the local welfare system*

The Director of the *Doux calins* part-time childcare centre has a two-fold mission: she manages the childcare service, and also oversees social development in the district. This set up is original because it enables her to spend time working on various partnerships with local institutions, such as the school and city hall, and associations as well as inhabitants. It also enables her to monitor and assess the needs of families through information-exchange sessions and surveys. Several activities are carried out with other institutions and

organisations in the district. The person in charge of the ECC, and the part-time childcare centre Director, are members of an early childhood commission in the district. They are also involved as speakers at meetings and conferences organised by the city of Lille, such as the ‘Early Childhood General Assembly’ held in 2011.

The first interviews bear witness to the fact that there are obstacles making it impossible to more widely develop several experiments. Several factors have been identified. The main factor has to do with the lack of resources and means to consolidate the innovative activities. For instance, several of them are not or are no longer funded by the CAF (Family Allowance Office). While the municipality continues supporting them, it is not always able to extend them to other districts. More generally speaking, the managerial pressure coming from those who finance the projects, for whom the percentage of places filled is the principal indicator used to assess the organisation, makes the professionals vulnerable and undermines these organisations, which have less time to devote to common projects and partnerships in the district. When management is optimised in terms of the number of places filled, this leaves less room for qualitative innovation. Another factor is the distance or barriers between professionals and users, limiting the involvement of users. Despite several local experimentations for supporting parental participation and develop parenthood activities and spaces, professionals remain too often perceived as part of the “institutional world” or considered as “social workers” which are sometimes seen as a complex even “hostile world” especially by recent immigrant parents.

## CONCLUSION

### *Sustainability*

Among the innovations presented in this report, some are recent (support for self-renovation, *Parler Bambins*) and others are fragile (*Potes en Ciel*). In other words, the description and analysis of past initiatives shows that they are not all success stories. But the ability to overcome certain difficulties also influences the conditions for their sustainability.

### *From being in step with local priorities to being able to resist changes in the local political agenda*

This is more or less a question of chance and opportunism. Social innovations can be in step with dominant issues on national and local political agendas. From time to time priorities change, highlighting new practices and leaving previous innovations in the shade. For instance, parental participation was considered as innovative by childcare institutions a few years ago, but this is less the case at present. Conversely, local solutions such as *Parler Bambins* to fight against social and educational inequalities at the early preschool age are in keeping with the spirit of the times. In the housing and urban field, participation by inhabitants was a key component of urban social policies in the 1980s and 90s before it was progressively forgotten in favour of urban renewal policies in the 2000s, which were based on the demolition and reconstruction of former social housing areas. In this regard, some local authorities retain an ability to maintain their own political agendas concerning innovative issues, as illustrated by the action launched by Lille city council to promote self-renovation initiatives. Processes such as participation by inhabitants could re-emerge via a locally contentious context, for example, as triggered by the association *Rase pas mon quartier* [Don’t demolish my neighbourhood] that was the starting point for the Ilot Stephenson experiment in co-producing a neighbourhood urban renewal project.

### *From initial political support to institutional coalition*

Initial support from the local political sphere is often a crucial factor in the process by which local social policy innovations emerge, depending as they do mainly on public

funding, along with other local services of general interest. In Lille, *Parler Bambins* is clearly an experiment strongly supported by the elected councillor in charge of childcare. Support for self-renovation has been promoted internally by professionals in the Lille council housing department. Patrick Bouchain and his architects were called in by the mayor of Tourcoing and the semi-public company in charge of the *Union* renewal urban project. Even when the opportunity to support an initiative is the subject of political disputes or administrative resistance, as was initially the case for the children's café *Potes en Ciel*, local allies among elected officials opened windows of opportunities. The challenge of sustainability is to strengthen the initial political and/or administrative support over time and ensure that it is not merely a temporary boost. Longstanding commitment is decisive for building broader local coalitions of stakeholders and creating bridges between different political fields and administrative departments. This is, for instance, the strategy used by *Les compagnons bâtisseurs* for strengthening housing self-renovation experiments.

#### *Diversification and consolidation strategies for mobilising funds and resources*

This is a key point because funding support for innovation remains fragile. It is often project-based, limited in time and depreciation-based. Co-funding strategies are often the result of local authorities' rules and practices; as they are reluctant to invest in a project alone, building a local coalition of funders is often necessary. In this context, diversification strategies can mean getting funds from local authorities and public institutions at different levels and in charge of skills in different fields. Mixed funding also implies mobilizing private resources from private foundations, user contributions or the sale of services. Finally, non-monetary contributions from user participation or volunteer contributions could also be a component in a hybridized balance of resources. We can identify user participation in most of the initiatives analysed. In some of them it is at the heart of the projects, as in the children's café where parents are co-producers of the activities provided, or in support for housing self-renovation where household contributions are accounted for. In this context, renewal of volunteers, user participation and social mix are both key internal human resource for the sustainability of the service and an important external factor of legitimation support from partners and funders.

#### *Recognition and consolidation of new trades, atypical job profiles and skills mix*

An interesting aspect studied in several initiatives is the emergence of new professional practices or job profiles asking for a skills mix at the crossroads of different existing trades. For instance, being an advisor in the support team for housing self-renovation requires a mix of skills coming from the construction trades and social work sector. The architect's immersion in the building site led to direct management of relationships with inhabitants, not only with professionals in the urban renewal operation. In the early childhood centres in Faubourg de Bethune, the director of the part-time childcare service has, besides her management function, a social development mission in the district in relation to various neighbourhood associations and local institutions (schools, social centre, etc.) seeking to improve living conditions and social inclusion for families with young children. Making this kind of job sustainable is the challenge facing social innovators. It requires finding and attracting workers with a relatively rare profile who are sufficiently motivated to want to escape professional routines. The process of consolidating these atypical professions also requires social entrepreneurs to invent complex or tailored funding packages as well as specific deals with existing reference qualifications and training programmes.

#### *Dissemination*

##### *From singular initiative to innovative concept*



Dissemination means a way of translating a process for transforming specific practices emerging within a specific context into a more or less mainstream concept or story able to influence collective representations of what is or is not innovative, and to become relevant to people and institutions from outside. Dissemination cannot be disconnected from discursive innovations, which are often crystalized as an expression of a concept that can be circulated through different socio-cultural contexts. Several local initiatives studied in Lille (*Parler Bambins*, *Café Potes en Ciel* and support for housing self-renovation) are examples of the dissemination of innovations conceptualized elsewhere and adapted in response to local issues. Concretely, notions such as *Parler Bambins*, *Potes en Ciel* and support for housing self-renovation cover similar groups of initiatives which have already been tested in different cities. These are not products that can be technically reproduced, nor are they turnkey solutions; rather they are approaches, methods and organisations that could be characterized or formalized as principles of action and recommendations for implementation. The Ilot Stephenson case is interesting because conceptualization is an on-going process, expressed by the slogan *Faire ensemble, le grand ensemble* [Working together to build the whole urban area], which has not yet stabilized.

#### *Communications channels and media coverage*

This is a more ambiguous form of dissemination. Examples such as Ilot Stephenson or *Parler Bambins* demonstrate how an initiative, launched recently and yet having achieved much, can become the go-to concept despite the first positive outcomes yet to be confirmed. Even if a deeper analysis is needed of the role of communications as a key factor in the reputation of innovative practices, we can note that using different channels of communication facilitates broader coverage. A mix between major institutional communications (making a film, special website), local press articles, publications in academic and trade press, participation in diverse conferences or public events all constitute a favourable terrain for reaching the national media. How well social innovation performs does not always seem to be directly connected to effective results. But excessively rapid overexposure also risks compromising the longevity of social innovation.

#### *Formalizing mechanisms for transferring and adapting know-how and skills to different contexts*

Dissemination processes need formalized mechanisms for transferring and adapting concepts, know-how and skills to various promoters and stakeholders. This point can be illustrated in different ways via the Lille case studies: specific training sessions for local professional teams in the experimental *Parler Bambins* project and support for housing self-renovation, reference to and membership of a national charter for children cafés for *Potes en Ciel*, publication of a book on alternative and participative approaches to social housing construction and urban renewal neighbourhoods by the team of architects and urban planners from the *Construire* company. The dissemination challenge is based on the ability of pioneers and social innovators to transmit not only an inspirational vision and concept, but also operational principles. It also requires project management skills of local stakeholders.

Bottom-link supports mean that local innovation are integrated and legitimized by networks, processes and resources from other scales. In two cases studied, *Parler Bambins* and the Ilot Stephenson urban renewal project, the intervention of a scientific team or well-known architect from outside accelerated local innovation processes and overcame some resistance at the local level. A more traditional method of networking is the inclusion of local initiatives within a regional, national or European network able to offer symbolic, technical and financial opportunities. The creation of a national network of ten children's cafés is one example. Becoming members of *Les compagnons bâtisseurs* [Companion Builders] network is also an option considered by some local non-profit organisations in charge of implementing self-renovation housing projects in Lille.

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