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SOCIAL INNOVATIONS IN NANTES, FRANCE

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CONTENTS

1. BACKGROUND OF THE SOCIAL INNOVATIONS

Emergence of local proactive welfare policies:

As far as housing and childcare policies are concerned, multi-level governance is the predominant situation with more or less shared responsibilities between national and local governments. It introduces complex institutional relations and potential tensions on issues such as priorities on the agenda and funding. Indeed, childcare and housing issues are partly determined by national policies. Nevertheless, cities and metropolises have taken more responsibilities throughout the years for different reasons: continuation of the decentralisation process; context of the economic crisis implying state withdrawal from welfare policies; development of technical resources and expertise at the level of cities and metropolises, enabling them to develop their own policies. This is the case for the City of Nantes and Nantes Metropolis, which have been leading proactive welfare policies and playing a major role in promoting social innovations' development. It is worth noting that controversies, existing between national and Nantes local governments, mainly concern allocation of funds in a context of funding scarcity and constant drive for efficiency in public spending.

A tendency to focus on the most vulnerable groups within a social cohesion strategy:

One of the main Nantes City and Metropolis' welfare policy orientations is to address the most vulnerable social groups. For instance, the Local Housing Programme (2010-2016), focuses on rehabilitation and construction of social housing; rehabilitation of old unsanitary housing, improvement of energy efficiency; enhancing affordable housing for low- and intermediary-income households. Similarly, childcare policies, national as well as local, address new challenges of social cohesion, such as the increase of women's work and degradation of working conditions (precariousness, increase of part-time jobs and atypical hours). The priority is put on reconciling family life and professional commitments as a means to combat poverty.

Though there is a multiplicity of actors, providers and institutions in the field of childcare, reconciliation between family and work is subject to a relative consensus among them (political majority and opposition, public structures and associations). Important reforms have been implemented since 2004 (strong increase of new places in collective care, a more integrated local child care governance, new services dedicated to low-income families, etc.) and led to the building of new bridges between child care and employment policies and the respective administrative services, which were completely separate until then. Indeed, we notice the dissemination of new employment policy patterns to childcare policies.

In 2007-2009, a new "social experimentation" in the employment field was launched in order to improve the mechanisms of social allowances (*Activity Solidarity Income*), aiming at combating poverty of employees and facilitating poor families' return to work. The innovation initiated by the City of Nantes (presented below) uses the same terminology of "social experimentation" and similar patterns, encouraging low-income mothers to return to work thanks to the improvement of child care facilities. To a certain extent, the priority is to improve access of vulnerable groups, less by creating specific and dedicated services and programmes than by facilitating their access to traditional social services through adaptation and better coordination of existing providers and professionals or through local experiments with new intermediations between different policy fields.

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

At the same time, multi-level governance creates windows of opportunity for social innovations in terms of recognition and funding. For instance, the emergence of metropolises in the 2000s led to the implementation of new local policies. This is the case of Nantes Metropolis, created in 2001, that has initiated SSE policies since 2002. Until the election of François Hollande in 2012, there was no national SSE policy. Local SSE policies gave opportunities and space for social innovation and initiatives in a cross-cutting perspective. As an example, Nantes Metropolis SSE policies promote the development of cross-cutting approaches between sectorial policies, reinforcing partnerships between public and non-governmental organisations.

Nantes Metropolis has created a specific SSE Call for Proposals, in order to finance new and socially innovative projects in various fields such as home care services, home-sharing, childcare, social entrepreneurship, intercultural exchanges, international solidarity, organic agriculture, waste recycling, territorial and neighbourhood revitalization, etc. The specificity of such a Call for Proposals is to support projects that address different sectorial policies at the same time (housing, education, employment, culture, child care, etc.). This framework of action is new in comparison with traditional public action frameworks of local institutions and civil servants that classify policies according to their areas of competence and not to the reality of newly emerged action.

Plurality of discourses on social innovation:

The main frameworks for innovation policy remain related to economic development, research and technology investment, information technology, support for entrepreneurship, etc. Technological and economic innovations are promoted in the Pays de la Loire regional territory through the "*Atlanpole technopole*" (high-tech industrial research and development facilities), fostering the emergence and development of innovative companies and facilitating networks of actors. However, social innovation is not absent from local political discourse. Whereas in the 1990s NGOs were considered as key agents in innovative practices, they no longer have the monopoly over discourse on this issue. Local authorities also tend to present the action or policies they experiment and implement as innovative social strategies. In the Nantes municipal childcare project, presented below, public institutions present themselves as social innovators, while non-for-profit organisations are not associated in the project or considered as partners of childcare policies.

In addition, it is worth underlining how social innovation is progressively integrated into a new framework of local public action. In 2012 Nantes Metropolis and City initiated a joint project on innovation in public action, presented in the official discourse as the main source of change in policies. Working groups (administrative services and policy makers) aim at drafting a first set of good practices and defining favourable conditions for innovation; elaborating a more operational framework for supporting innovation in the territory; and deciding strategic orientations for public policy.

However, we observe at the same time the emergence of new discourses and positions on social innovation in the third sector. One is the emergence of a social entrepreneur discourse that, in line with a European approach, is more and more often associated with social innovation. Within the initiatives selected, we can find both new social entrepreneur profiles (Time for roof) that promote a move towards social entrepreneurship in comparison with traditional social services, but also new projects supported by civil society organisations and social and solidarity-based economic programmes that present themselves as "social entrepreneurs" because it tends to appear to local policy makers as a "modern" and "innovative" approach in order to tackle social issues.

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Grassroots initiatives, on the other hand, could speak of social innovation without promoting the social entrepreneurship perspective. This notion is not stabilised, which explains why networks in the third sector "milieu" and policy makers have developed different conceptions of "social entrepreneurship" and "social innovation".

Family-minded and friendly projects as a way to facilitate social cohesion:

In a context of rationalization of social policies, increasing budget constraints, and the standardisation and specialisation of social work tasks it is interesting to note that two initiatives presented in the case studies intend to build new spaces for exchanges, not only in a functional perspective (rendering services to target groups) but also aiming at creating social ties between inhabitants developing convivial activities, mixing different groups, such as young and elderly people, mothers from social disadvantaged areas and mothers from middle-classes, etc.

This report presents three social innovations that have recently emerged in the territory of Nantes Metropolis. One of them is a grassroots initiative developed by the non-for-profit organisation Time for Roof. The second is a top-down driven initiative, supported jointly by three local childcare institutions: the City of Nantes, the local Family Allowance Fund and the General Council. The third initiative combines two approaches: seven grassroots initiatives opened neighbourhood community centres and a network, made up of the seven initiatives, was created based on the idea and the support of local public institutions and well-established NGOs.

2. EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL INNOVATIONS

2.1. Time for Roof: description of a housing innovation

The project Time for Roof emerged in 2005 in the specific context of the years 2003-2005: the heat wave of the summer 2003 caused an enormous number of deaths of elderly people and highlighted the issue of isolation for elderly people living alone. Most French experiences of intergenerational cohabitation have been initiated in this context since 2004. In addition, the project aimed at addressing the lack of cheap lodging for students and young people undergoing professional integration.

The association Time for Roof defines its objectives as follows:
- to propose a local and affordable accommodation solution to students and young workers;
- to find local and inexpensive solutions to enable older people to remain in their own homes;
- more generally, to offer a solution to people for whom everyday life becomes less easy to manage because of ageing, loneliness, family situation;
- to promote solidarity between older and younger generations by the exchange of concrete services (housing for help) and mutual support between the householder and the home-sharer.

This initiative supported 82 "duos" of householders and home-sharers in 2011. In total, since the beginning of the project, 350 duos have been accompanied by the organisation. Time for Roof offers users different types of contracts, depending on the needs of the elderly people and the personal commitment of the young people. The economic model is based on a mix of monetary contributions and solidarity-based mutual help. The financial contribution is inversely proportional to the quantity of services rendered or regular presence given: for householders, the more they need presence, the more they pay; for

home-sharers, the more they commit themselves to the relationship and give time, the less they pay.

2.1.1. Conception and ways of addressing users

The association Time for Roof proposes innovative services to its users: exchange of housing for support, reinforcing social and solidarity ties, enabling elderly people losing autonomy to stay at their homes, providing support and mediation between the users. The exchange of time and presence between the users constitutes a fundamental dimension of the project. In the context of home care services for elderly people, it can be seen as an innovative aspect in a context of rationalisation of home care professional interventions. Professional caregivers have to fulfil more standardised tasks and have less time to share with the elderly person. By contrast, exchanging time and reinforcing social ties are at the centre of the Time for Roof project.

Furthermore, the direction taken by the Time for Roof cofounders is to put the emphasis on intergenerational cohabitation as a way to address limits of home care services for elderly people losing their autonomy. The solution proposed by Time for Roof is complementary to "professional" home care services in the way that it does not replace the services of personal care attendants or family caregivers but gives additional help in the form of presence in the evening and during the night: generally it is the moment when people are left alone and may face difficulties. It can be considered as *a* preventive approach in care for elderly people. It helps people to stay living at their homes longer and postpone recourse to other more complex and expensive solutions. This trend corresponds to a real demand from elderly people: in 2010, 60% of the new contracts were dedicated to such situations.

As a consequence, the evolution of the householders' profile has led to a modification in the profile of the home-sharers. At the beginning of the project, a majority of students was contacting the association. Nowadays, home-sharers are mainly workers being in a phase of professional transition or attending vocational training that makes them live for a temporary period in Nantes. The average age of the home-sharers is 31. Some of them, generally women, face a difficult social or family situation (divorce, hospitalization of a close relative, etc). They look for a cheap accommodation and very rapidly see the advantages of such a solution, especially from the financial point of view: they "pay 10 times less than if they were renting a classical accommodation". At the same time, these people can be defined as mature and competent, ready to go living with elderly people in more difficult situations.

The exchange of housing for services and a regular presence is made possible thanks to the mediation and support of Time for Roof. The mediation, paid for by the users, consists of different key components, on which depends the success of the home sharing: selection process of the users; establishment of personalized contact, presentation of the rights and obligations of the users preventing conflicts between the users; providing capacity-building. Time for Roof plays a role of conflict prevention and management by watching over the situation of the users. Indeed, the situation may become explosive between the two people; the health of the host person may deteriorate rapidly, requiring a decision to be taken urgently. The organisation stays in contact with the users and organises regular meetings with the householder and the home-sharer, generally every month and a half or every 2 months. Training sessions play a major role of support to the home-sharers, especially for those signing a totem contract: professionals help home-sharers to better understand the situation of the elderly and analyse difficulties they may face. The global support provided to users plays a major role in the success and sustainability of the duos, especially in the case of totem contracts.

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2.1.2. Internal organisation and modes of working

In order to develop its sustainability, the association considers itself as part of the social and solidarity-based economy and promotes hybridization of sources of funding (public, private, non-monetary). Concerning the Time for Roof budget in 2012, one third comes from the users' contribution, one third corresponds to the funding of the paid staff from the Regional Council and Nantes Metropolis, and one third comes from external funding through calls for projects (public institutions and private foundations). In addition, it is worth mentioning that the association also develops voluntary work: 15 volunteers are recruited for their skills and involved in different types of activities (organisation of conferences and public events, communication, support for users).

The internal organisation of the association raises the question of the quality of work. For the time being, the working team is composed of 6 full-time paid staff members. The salaries are co-funded by the Regional Council and Nantes Metropolis for a period of 8 years. Each year, the amount financed by the Regional Council is reduced and not compensated by Nantes Metropolis, which means that the association has to develop its own resources in order to keep the paid staff at the end of public funding. In addition, salaries are relatively low.

Working on time-limited projects and contracts that are project-based is not considered as an innovation by the staff. On the one hand, it shows the capacity of the organisation to adapt its work to new constraints and to develop new and innovative projects (for instance, the new project on social housing landlords). On the other hand, this organisational form is not supported by regular funders and well-established welfare policies, which would guarantee continuity of funding and prevent a too high dependency on short-time projects.

2.1.3. Interaction with the local welfare system

The association's cofounders intend to create an impact on the local welfare system. Their main focus concerns intergenerational cohabitation as an alternative solution for keeping elderly people living at their homes. The Time for Roof association raises public awareness through the publication of newsletters, the organisation of public conferences on intergenerational cohabitation, participation in public events organised by vocational training institutes, pension funds, complementary medical assurance funds, etc. The organisation has developed links within the health and homecare local sector: professionals, doctors, home care services, non-for-profit organisations, Municipal Social Action Centres and sociologists working on the theme of care for elderly people. The doctors and professional caregivers they are associated with see the positive effects of intergenerational cohabitation on the health of their patients.

Since its creation in 2005, the Time for Roof association is regularly invited by national and local public institutions (ministry of Social Cohesion, General Council, Nantes municipality, etc.) to participate in working meetings aiming at elaborating strategic priorities in the field of care for elderly people. But Time for Roof is seen by public institutions as the organiser of an experimental project still under construction and not yet as a regular partner in the elaboration of policies. This situation raises the question of the diffusion at a larger scale of such an initiative if intergenerational cohabitation has to be recognised officially. For the time being, there is no juridical framework, the host and housed people do not have an official status recognised by the State, and neither does the signed contract.

For the time being, two French networks of non-governmental organisations exist in the field of intergenerational cohabitation (*Cohabitation Solidaire Intergénérationnelle* and *Logement Intergénérationnel Solidaire*). The lack of public recognition of intergenerational cohabitation and visibility of the associative actors involved in this field may be explained by their financial precariousness and the competition existing between them. As a consequence, we observe the weakness of intergenerational home sharing organisations' coalitions. They lack a common strategic vision and wish to collectively develop advocacy actions towards governmental institutions. Competition between organisations constitutes a real obstacle to social innovation sustainability.

Last but not least, Time for Roof has succeeded in disseminating the project in other locations and for other target groups. In 2007, it reproduced the project in the City of Angers. According to the founders, the local context was easier in Angers: contrary to Nantes, where they are in competition with another association, Time for Roof received the full support of the City of Angers to develop its project. Today, the project is well developed in Angers and one full-time paid staff member works there. In 2012, the association obtained funds from social housing landlords, Nantes Metropolis and the Regional Council to develop a new project in the disadvantaged residential districts. Until now, intergenerational home sharing was not developed for rental lodging, especially social housing, and the most socially excluded people were not addressed by Time for Roof. In the framework of this project, the association comes across new profiles of users and new social needs. In addition, the association should also soon begin a new project in rural areas.

2.2. Joint assessment of families' needs and changes in childcare provision for single-parent families

2.2.1. Short description of the innovation

For the past twenty years, the City of Nantes has been adopting policies in the field of childcare services, in order not only to increase the number of places in collective childcare facilities but also to achieve social objectives, such as social cohesion and reconciliation between work and family life. Emphasis is put on the most vulnerable groups, such as parents returning to work or completing vocational training and experiencing difficult social situations. This initiative intends to address the issue of low-income single parents for whom access to childcare services is an obstacle to labour market inclusion. It is the result of an original joint assessment and a strong partnership between local childcare institutions (the City of Nantes, the local Family Allowance Fund and the General Council).

The North Nantes district was chosen because of the density social housing. Some 200 single-parent recipients of the Active Solidarity Income (RSA) are registered there. The main change for single mothers was the merger in 2009 of the Single Parent Allowance (*Allocation Parent Isolé*) that targeted single parents as part of the RSA programme. As recipients of the RSA, the single parents are now obliged to commit themselves to a process of social and professional inclusion. As a consequence, the General Council in charge of the implementation of the RSA has to find concrete solutions for facilitating the return to employment of single parents. Indeed, a financial incentive such as the RSA has limited effectiveness unless the main barriers to employment for single mothers, such as the lack of suitable childcare services, are taken into account.

This innovation can be characterised as an institutional experiment in local welfare governance rather than a grassroots innovation.

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2.2.2. Conception and ways of addressing users

The main innovative dimension is characterised by the improvement of access to childcare services for low-income single parents as a way to remove barriers to their professional inclusion. The initiative consists of a new municipal service dedicated to this target group and aiming at developing adequate solutions to their specific needs.

In order to reduce the fragmentation of the local childcare system, the City of Nantes set up four Childhood Coordination Centres in the City area in October 2011, in charge of informing and supporting families in their search for early childhood services and of coordinating childcare services with other public institutions. Three Childhood Coordination Centres are located in "sensitive urban areas". The coordinators of the Childhood Coordination Centres play a major role in supporting single mothers undergoing social and professional inclusion: proposing different childcare solutions adapted to their needs and contacting the relevant structures with them, acting as an intermediary between the childcare services and the employment offices. This coordination between childcare and employment services is a major innovation, since before the professionals were not informed of other institutions' missions and did not contact each other.

In addition, the emergency places service, already existing in Nantes, has been adapted to the needs of low-income single parents looking for a job: the duration period of the emergency care has been extended; new emergency places have been created; a new procedure is in place, giving direct access to places in child care collective centres without going through the municipal admission commission. This exemption of the common rules is characteristic of the initiative, whose aim is to facilitate immediate solutions to emergency situations.

Among the different new services of the initiative, it is also planned to encourage individual care. The idea is to mobilise and support a group of child-minders, who agree to work with single parent families in difficulty. In order to overcome the issue of affordability the City of Nantes, the local CAF and the General Council created a common Guarantee Fund (30,000 euros[1]) in case families fail to pay the child-minders. This Fund is presented as an innovation in that it is a concrete realisation of the cross-cutting approach encouraged by the three institutions in this initiative.

Six months after the beginning of the initiative, we observed the first signs of a lower demand of single parents than expected. Around 20 families benefited from the initiative from January to July 2012. Among them, 5 families accepted child-minder services, 2 of them received places in day care centres in the framework of the new mechanism reserved for professional inclusion, and the rest of the families were given places in day-care centres through emergency places or usual occasional care. In addition, the Guarantee Fund has not been used yet. Possible explanations are that the selection criteria for beneficiaries were too restrictive and the absence of participation of beneficiaries, associations and child-minders in the project's elaboration.

2.2.3. Internal organisation and modes of working

In addition to the newly created childcare services aiming at removing obstacles for the professional inclusion of single-parent families, the innovative dimension of this institutional initiative consists of the constitution of cross-cutting modes of working and new professional practices.

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[1] Each institution gave 10,000 euros.

A main dimension of the innovation is to promote a better long-term coordination between childcare services and local employment offices, in order to facilitate the reconciliation of care and work for single mothers. Although the political support of these three institutions was essential for the emergence of the innovation, its success depends on the quality of cooperation practices between professionals from childcare and employment sectors. A preparatory phase constituted a very important period of construction of the initiative in as far as it enabled child care and employment professionals to begin working together "to find a common language", to create interpersonal relationships between professionals and to enable them to integrate the innovation's objectives and the respective functions they would have to fulfil. After six months of experimenting, professionals attest to the positive impact of the inter-sectorial cooperation: they contact each other to solve concrete situations affecting single parent families and succeed in finding solutions together. Nevertheless, there is a need to enlarge this cooperation to other public employment services (Municipal Employment Services, State Agency for job seekers).

This initiative provoked resistance among two professional groups. On the one hand, the idea of mobilising a group of child-minders, who agree to work with single parent families, had been developed following the example of a successful project carried out in another city[2]. The aim is to provide mutual support among child-minders and to give them a secure framework. Nevertheless, in Nantes, six months after the beginning of the initiative, the results were very limited. In the local context, where there is a shortage of places, child-minders are in a position to choose the profile of the parents, and low-income single families undergoing professional inclusion are not attractive for them. On the other hand, the introduction of a new framework of action, much more oriented towards the "welfare to work" principle and aiming at changing families' and professionals' representations, has impacts on professional practices. Childcare professionals and social workers are asked to consider return to work as a new priority in their support to mothers, while until now the focus was put on the wellbeing of the child and the mother. For all groups, child-minders, child care professionals and social workers, the initiative's new framework of action may be perceived as an intrusion in their practices.

2.2.4. Interaction with the local welfare system

This innovation has raised awareness among childcare professionals and policymakers on the issue of employment and professional inclusion. The introduction of a new priority given to low-income single parents has led to modifications in representations and practices. Concerning municipal childcare collective centres, new selection criteria, focusing on this target group, are now used, though it provoked resistance at the beginning among professionals. The idea that childcare services should play a role in the professional inclusion of parents is progressively spreading in the local child care system and recognised as legitimate. Nevertheless, it raises the question of whether the innovation could contribute to a sustainable cross-cutting approach between child care and employment policies. In order to enable the City of Nantes, the local CAF and the General Council to cooperate on concrete objectives, the choice was made to work using a project-based logic with objectives, activities, expected results, division of tasks and responsibilities. It permitted professionals, coming from different institutions, to work on common objectives, but it may be difficult to apply to policies.

Local childcare policies are facing a financial withdrawal by the National Family Allowance Fund (CNAF), rationalization of resources and a constant drive for public spending efficiency. In this context, the financial sustainability of this kind of initiative constitutes a major issue. Therefore, the approach chosen by the municipality is to integrate this

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[2] The City of Grigny.

innovation into local child care policies. The local CAF has a similar strategy of promoting progressive inclusion of the innovation in its general framework of action. A possibility would be to mention the initiative in the Childhood-Youth Contract that frames the financial relationship between the CAF and the municipalities. The three institutional partners in the initiative are planning to carry out an evaluation on the results of the innovation one year after its launch. The aim is to decide if a duplication of the initiative is relevant or not. All the three institutions express the desire to pursue the initiative, planned for two years, and apply it to the whole territory of Nantes.

Nevertheless, the approach chosen for the dissemination of the initiative, that is to say, an inclusion in mainstream local childcare and employment policies, brings into question the possibility of reproducing it. Indeed, the success of the initiative relies mostly on the existing network of childcare and employment professionals, who participated in the construction of the mechanisms developed. "The transmission of good practices through procedural guidelines will not be enough to reproduce the initiative to other districts and among other professionals"[3]. Strong commitment by the three public institutions may be needed to support the dissemination and encourage a larger number of local professionals towards making important changes in their practices and representations.

2.3. The *Lieux Collectifs de Proximité* network: description of a childcare and women's innovation

The network of "Lieux Collectifs de Proximité" ("neighbourhood community places" referred to hereafter as LCP) was created in April 2010 by seven local initiatives[4] as a means to enable their development and sustainability, to professionalize their modes of working and secure long-term funding. In the framework of a collective project aiming at defining their common features and recognising the specificity of their work, a name and a definition were elaborated by the seven initiatives:

> *An LCP is a place that is open to all, with a strong identity, located in different neighbourhoods in Nantes Metropolis. It produces services aiming at strengthening social diversity, social ties and citizenship, improving living surroundings, reinforcing community dynamic. Therefore, it promotes inhabitants' direct participation and cooperation with other local actors, including public institutions. The LCP is an innovative actor on its territory at the level of governance and delivered services. Its services are complementary to public institutions and it plays the role of a bridge between inhabitants and these institutions.*

This definition enables very different initiatives to gather around common objectives. Their diversity concerns their location (city centre, middle-class neighbourhood, socially disadvantaged district, Nantes City suburbs) as well as the profile of their target groups (women, families, youth, children) and the content of the actions. We can underline the following activities as the main characteristics of the seven local initiatives:

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[3] Interview with a Coordinator of a Childhood Coordination Centre, North Nantes district.

[4] The network consists of the following seven local initiatives: *A l'abordâge*, a café for children, created in 2004, *L'Equipage*, a bookshop created in 2009, *L'îlot Familles* (2010), *Rencontres Amitiés et Partage Interculturels* ("Intercultural Meetings and Friendship" referred to hereafter as *RAPI*), (2009), *Regart's* (2005), *Style Alpaga* (1995), *Tak Après* (1999).

- social inclusion and professional integration for disadvantaged youth and women, enhancing their professional know-how (sewing, dry-cleaning, children care, intercultural cooking, etc.);
- social and cultural development of children;
- reinforcing parenthood, strengthening ties between parents and children;
- creating exchanges of know-how (computer, cooking, art, etc.) and mutual support between neighbourhood inhabitants;
- developing an economic activity as a means to support collective projects: for instance, the production of food catering services, based on the know-how and participation of the women, enables financing of cultural activities aimed at reinforcing the sense of citizenship among immigrant women.

Though the LCP network was created by grassroots initiatives, public institutions and well-known non-governmental organisations have played a major role in its conception and development. Indeed, the specific local context of Nantes Metropolis Social and Solidarity-based Economy (SSE) policies and the existence of a close public-private partnership have contributed to the emergence of the LCP network. Nantes Metropolis has been developing proactive SSE policies for years. Recognised as major local non-governmental associations, in 2010 *Ecossolies*[5] and *Animation Rurale 44*[6] participated in the first meetings between LCP leaders and worked with Nantes Metropolis to formulate the idea of funding the development of a network.

2.3.1. Conception and ways of addressing users

One of the main LCP initiatives' specificities is to focus on conviviality as a goal in itself and as a way to achieve its objectives (social inclusion, professional integration, etc.). This is an important dimension of the LCP, created as friendly places where women and families feel at ease and not only as social services providers. The innovative dimension of the LCP lies in their capacity to create family-minded and friendly spaces of exchanges and meetings among people as a way to combat social exclusion and loneliness of people living close by. For instance, the cafés *L'Equipage* and *A l'Abordage* have become a point of reference for parents and isolated inhabitants experiencing temporary difficult situations: divorces, long-term unemployment, disability, recent arrival in the city, etc. Construction of social ties is the key element for helping women in difficult social situations: "poverty without social ties, it is hell".

National and local studies have shown the increasing number of people who do not have recourse to their rights, either because they are not aware of them, or because they have given up on the possibility of gaining access to their rights (discouragement when faced with the complexity of administrative procedures, loss of self-esteem, stigmatisation effects, etc.). This issue constitutes a major challenge for LCP initiatives. Indeed, the LCP leaders feel that the inhabitants they meet lack confidence in public institutions and this problem is more acute in the socially disadvantaged districts with a high concentration of migrants and French families with foreign origins. Each LCP initiative has developed networks with local social institutions (Family Allowance Office), associations and professionals (jurists, psychologists, etc.), so that it can orientate or support users to the right body, provide inhabitants with information on their rights (domestic violence, immigration law) and develop their capabilities to overcome difficult situations (arrival of the first child at home, divorce). Nevertheless, as far as mediation between users and public administrations is concerned, the key innovative dimension of the LCP initiatives lies

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[5] Created in 2006 and regrouping a large number of local SSE actors (associations, cooperatives, foundations, social entrepreneurs, etc).
[6] Specialised in childhood and youth projects.

in their capacity to welcome newcomers in a family-minded and convivial atmosphere, which enables users to re-create social ties and self-confidence, disclose social difficulties and then find adequate solutions, in relation with local partners.

The LCP initiatives all aim to develop co-productive approaches that build on the resources of the addressees. The activities developed by each LCP are based on the know-how, skills and preferences of the members and users willing to commit themselves to the association: production of food catering services, organisation of thematic workshops (well-being, music, travelling, sewing, etc.). They also promote empowering approaches for their members, highlighting their skills (either parental, either concerning a specific professional field) thanks to workshops organised with the support of professionals.

Several LCP initiatives specifically address professional integration of women considered as disqualified on the labour market. They promote a global approach of social support to women and families, which may be considered as innovative in the national and local context. Indeed, two main approaches towards social and professional inclusion may be distinguished. On the one hand, national and local institutions are developing programmes addressing low-income single parents for whom access to childcare services is the main obstacle to labour market inclusion (see innovation II above). On the other hand, the LCP initiatives are integrating the professional dimension into more open support for women where gaining self-confidence, highlighting their own skills, developing their social networks, resolving concrete problems, such as mobility and access to transport, health, social rights, knowledge of the French language and culture, are as important as child care, when considering the return to work of women in difficult social situations and disqualified on the labour market.

2.3.2. Internal organisation and modes of working

After a first period of development, the LCP initiatives are in the process of clarifying their working methods in line with the classical path generally taken by voluntary organisations. Today's LCP leaders were among the founders and their personal commitment was a determinant factor in the project's success. At the same time, the volunteers are playing an important role in the working organisation with tasks such as reception of users, organisation of workshops, administrative work, etc.

Securing professional positions, professionalising the modes of working and strengthening the users' participation are the main current challenges. First of all, over the years most of the LCP initiatives have obtained public funding for one or several professional positions (an average of 2.7 full-time equivalent per LCP). Nevertheless, public funding is limited in its duration (two or three years according to the contracts). It is important to note the precarious professional situation of the LCP professionals: absence of long-term perspectives for themselves and the structure, low level of salaries in comparison with the responsibilities and skills they have, quantitative deficiency of paid staff members in comparison with the overload of work. It has contributed to difficulties inside the structures: professional burn-out, difficulty in keeping on giving time and attention to users when administrative work becomes more and more time-consuming. Secondly, it raises the question of the respective roles of volunteers and professionals in the LCP organisation. Until now the separation between volunteers and paid staff members' skills and responsibilities has not been very strictly defined in the LCP organisation. The LCP are assessing the limits of such an organisation and expressing a need for more professional skills. The priority is today to recruit professionals whose function is to support volunteers' participation, whose skills enable to mobilise volunteers on the LCP project and coordinate them around common objectives and activities.

In order to develop its sustainability, the LCP initiatives are developing diversification strategies and sources of funding. All seven LCP have succeeded in mixing public, private and non-monetary resources. Public funding[7] constitutes the main resource of the LCP (from 58% to 92% of their budget). Four LCP have private resources (an average of 30% of the budget) thanks to the services they sell to users. Important commitment of volunteers is highlighted in three LCP.

In this context of fragile internal organisation, the LCP network is used as a tool for securing professional positions and developing longstanding sustainability. Since its creation in 2010, the LCP network has been functioning as a loose and flexible structure, dedicated to strengthening the organisational capacities of the seven initiatives. We can underline the organisation of training sessions and exchanges of experiences between LCP leaders. Nevertheless, the main achievement of the LCP network is the decision of the City of Nantes and Nantes Metropolis in May 2013 to secure and fund on a long-term basis the directors/coordinators' positions for the seven LCP. The intense capacity-building process initiated in 2011 by the network has led to the official recognition of the LCP as innovative actors and to additional funding, in particular for the most urgent needs: salaries and premises. Furthermore, the City of Nantes and Nantes Metropolis have agreed to fund a "mutual support platform" with the recruitment of two professionals (support to the directors in the performance of their multiple functions, fundraising, book-keeping, etc.).

2.3.3. Interaction with the local welfare system

The LCP network plays a classical network role, which is to make its members more visible and legitimate them. The network creates much more important opportunities for dialogue and negotiation with public institutions than those each LCP could have on its own. It enables the LCP leaders to make their voices heard and advocate about common problems they face, such as lack of premises and the precariousness of professional staff. They also recognise that belonging to the network and being in contact with well-established NGOs permitted them to reduce possible misunderstandings with political representatives (better understanding of the political world's codes of conduct and decision-making processes' slowness, in contrast to the field-based realities they face in everyday life).

The main innovation of the LCP network is its capacity to have obtained cross-cutting funding for the LCP network as a whole, especially in the national and local context of public funds' reduction and the economic crisis. Indeed, the City of Nantes and Nantes Metropolis agreed to finance the sustainability of the LCP network, which means that each of the seven LCP receives long-term funding because they belong to the network and independently of the sectorial policies that may be concerned by each LCP's activities. It recognises LCP's added value in developing cross-cutting approaches in the same place (parenthood and children, citizen participation, social mediation, professional integration, etc.).

In addition, the strength of the network lies in its capacity to maintain collective negotiations, which has helped to enhance its autonomy and legitimacy with public institutions and the initiatives themselves. The collective dimension of the LCP network's advocacy introduced, for public institutions, insecurity in the decision-making process and potential loss of power. The City of Nantes is not used to negotiate funding for associations on a multilateral principle and attempted to obtain bilateral decisions or to divide LCP initiatives. But the LCP leaders, supported by *Ecossolies* and *Animation Rurale 44*, kept on defending a collective position towards public institutions.

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[7] Funding comes from the State, the General Council, the City of Nantes, Nantes Metropolis and the Family Allowance Fund.

It raises the issue of the LCP network's governance, the role of the LCP initiatives' Boards of Administration, absent from the negotiation process, and the independence of the LCP network from public institutions. The new mutual sharing platform should be coordinated by a governance body, in which the City of Nantes and Nantes Metropolis intend to participate along with several LCP leaders, *Ecossolies* and *Animation Rurale 44* representatives. Though this model of collaborative governance can be viewed as innovative in its capacity to secure a public-associative partnership, it raises the issue of to what extent LCP non-professional members, whose participation is supposed to be at the core of the projects and guarantee the initiatives' collective dimension and autonomy, are considered or not as legitimate and key stakeholders in the governance of this kind of regulation body.

CONCLUSION

Sustainability

The innovations studied in Nantes are quite recent and still developing. Nevertheless, they have reached a certain level of stabilisation and are already overcoming difficulties. Therefore, we can already underline several key elements of sustainability.

One important aspect is the integration in broad coalitions. Initial support from the local political sphere is often a crucial factor in the process by which local social policy innovations emerge, as they depend mainly on public funding. Local allies, especially among elected officials, open windows of opportunity. 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 the LCP network for strengthening the seven local initiatives. Similarly the strong partnership between the City of Nantes, the General Council and the CAF is a condition of sustainability of the initiative. Conversely, although it received support from elected district representatives at the beginning, which contributed to open the doors to public funding, Time for Roof did not succeed over time in building broader local coalitions of stakeholders. This is one of the factors impeding the association from being fully legitimate and securing its sustainability.

Building broad institutional coalitions requires federating all stakeholders: elected representatives and civil servants; high and intermediary levels (directors of administrative services and professionals, such as social workers, etc.). If one of them is missing, it can jeopardize the success of the innovation.

Integration into non-governmental networks and coalitions are a way to enhance public recognition of the social innovation. For social innovations that emerged from grassroots non-governmental organisations, a main challenge of sustainability is to integrate broader local and national networks as a way to legitimate their actions and benefit from resources already developed by other structures. This is the case of the LCP network, which has contributed to increasing the power of negotiation of each particular social initiative and lobbied public institutions on common issues and challenges. The main factor is the support of two local well-recognised non-governmental organisations (*Ecossolies* and *Animation Rurale 44*), which use their own resources, such as direct contacts with political elected officials and civil servants, to promote the grassroots initiatives. On the contrary, we could say that the absence of fruitful cooperation between Time for Roof and other national or regional umbrellas involved in intergenerational cohabitation hinders public recognition of the social innovation.

Are public-private partnerships a risk for social innovation's independence? Broad coalitions of public institutions and non-governmental associations may lead to the constitution of close partnerships, enabling them to secure public funding for social innovations. It is the case in the LCP project, in which a new governance body comprises public institutions, two local NGOs and the LCP leaders (professionals). But it could jeopardize social innovations' independence in relation to public institutions, in as far as representatives of grassroots initiatives are in a minority and LCP initiatives' Boards of Administration are not invited to be members.

Co-construction of new working cultures, quality of work and associative governance

New innovative practices challenge their surroundings and the social innovation's protagonists themselves. Although the change promoters may be convinced on the relevancy of the new working culture brought by the innovation, the stakeholders involved in its co-production and implementation (professional staff, volunteers, users, etc.) may be sceptic or reluctant to integrate new professional cultures and practices. The participation of stakeholders in the co-construction of the project and the existence of a capacity-building process are crucial for the sustainability of the social innovation. For instance, in the project initiated by the City of Nantes, a preparatory phase organised for childcare and employment services enabled professionals to overcome their fears and resistance. In the LCP project, external consultants provided LCP leaders with training and capacity building. It enabled them to co-construct a common identity, culture and practices with the grassroots initiatives.

In its first phase of development, social innovation does not have a stable organisational structure and generally requires polyvalence and the capacity to mix different skills (social, administrative, financial, political, technical, etc.), to adapt and react rapidly to new situations. In this context, professionals often face precarious working conditions, overload of work, low salaries, non-recognition of their skills and burn-out. Therefore, a key factor of sustainability is the capacity of the social innovation to stabilise its working conditions and find longstanding solutions to the professionals' precariousness.

Social innovations often emerge thanks to the strong personal commitment of the founders, giving time on a voluntary basis and being available for developing the project and contacts. Thus, it raises the question of sustainability beyond the investment of a few individuals. The capacity for developing and maintaining a collective dimension, implying the participation of users and volunteers in the co-production of services and in the governance body, is also a main challenge of sustainability.

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. The role of specific funding mechanisms is important for the emergence of social innovation. The existence of public calls for proposals dedicated to the emergence of new projects is an important factor of development for social innovations. It is interesting to note that public funds do not often come from sectorial social policies (housing, elderly people, child care, etc.) but from cross-cutting policies, such as Social and Solidarity-based Economy policies or the Social European Fund. For instance, the Social and Solidarity-based Economy Call for Proposals, created in 2006 by Nantes Metropolis, plays a major role in support for grassroots initiatives: between 2006 and 2010, 129 grants were allocated to 73 organisations for a total amount of 673,000 euros.

Nevertheless, in as far as this first support is limited in its duration, the main challenge is long-term funding for social innovations. 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. As a consequence, fundraising often becomes a permanent activity for social innovations and takes an enormous amount of time, without the assurance that the result will be positive and often to the detriment of time spent with users. In addition, time-limited funding constitutes a real limit since it requires social innovations to keep on running after new opportunities (calls for proposals, etc.). It also requires adapting project proposals to the selection criteria defined by public institutions or private foundations. This may lead to paradoxical situations for social innovations. For instance, in order to get financial support, Time for Roof is required to keep on proposing new innovating projects. As a consequence, it faces the following contradiction: it is not given the means to sustain its innovation and constantly faces risks of destabilisation of its structure by being forced to innovate all the time.

Furthermore, the sustainability of social innovations raises the question of the continuity and the quality of the support given by public institutions. In Nantes, once social innovations are no longer funded by the SSE Call for Proposals, there are no other specific budget lines and we note a vacuum between the first grants given to the new innovative projects and the support given to more consolidated projects by sectorial administrative departments (employment, housing, child care, etc.) but not adapted to social innovations still under construction.

There is a need for the development of cross-cutting funding between different policy fields. Social innovation often concerns several policy fields (housing, child care, employment, youth, care for elderly people and social and solidarity-based economy policies) and demonstrates that cross-cutting approaches are suitable to address complex social problems. But it faces many obstacles and resistance, since the sectorial division of policy fields is deeply rooted in the welfare system and its modification requires long-term cultural changes, loss of power and budgets, etc. Nevertheless, we observe that the LCP project and the initiative led by the City of Nantes succeeded in obtaining cross-cutting and inter-institutional funding (City of Nantes, Nantes Metropolis, General Council, CAF). Future evaluation would enable analysis of the sustainability of such new funding mechanisms.

Mixed funding also implies mobilising private resources from private foundations, user contributions or the sale of services. In comparison with other intergenerational home sharing projects, Time for Roof has developed an original economic model in which financial participation of the users is a key element of sustainability. Users' contributions finance 60-70% of the intermediary role played by the association (support to the users, mediation, etc.).

Finally, non-monetary contributions from user participation or volunteer contributions could also be a component in a hybridised balance of resources. In some cases it is at the heart of the projects, as in the LCP initiatives, where parents, women and inhabitants are co-producers of the activities provided. In this context, renewal of volunteers, user participation and social mix are both key internal human resources for the sustainability of the service and an important external factor of legitimation as well as of independence in the relation with partners and funders.

Dissemination

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Diffusion is defined as the possibility of "mainstreaming" the respective organised projects, not only their operations, but also their central instruments, patterns, values and "messages", thereby influencing the institutional architecture as well as mind-sets in societies, their local welfare systems and governance.

New projects, identified as innovative in a particular context, may be based on other experimentations conceptualised and implemented elsewhere. But, in order to be successful, dissemination of good practices cannot be disconnected from local context specificities. The same innovative concept may lead to very diverse initiatives on the ground, and implies to be adapted in response to local issues. Among various factors, the understanding, position and support from various stakeholders (public bodies, professionals, users, etc) who structure the local "professional milieu" is a key element of diffusion. For instance, *Time for Roof* encountered strong political support in the city of Angers that enabled it to rapidly develop intergenerational homes haring based on the model conceived in Nantes. Conversely, the City of Nantes faced child-minders' resistance to cooperate. This can be explained by a lack of analysis of the Nantes context: the city of Nantes had taken for granted the conclusions of a similar project in the city of Grigny, where most child-minders were unemployed and looking for job. By contrast, child-minders in Nantes face a strong demand from parents and are able to choose those who propose secure funding.

Dissemination processes need formalised mechanisms for transferring and adapting concepts, know-how and skills to various promoters and stakeholders. This point can be illustrated in different ways by the Nantes case studies: training sessions for LCP leaders, creation of a collective LCP charter; working sessions for child care and employment services' professionals, elaboration of common working tools (information documents, procedures).

Communication plays a main role in dissemination. Innovative projects tend to diversify as much as possible their communication tools: websites, local press articles, publication in academic press, participation in diverse conferences and public events, etc. Besides, the support given by public institutions is another key factor of diffusion. For instance, the LCP has benefited from broad coverage by *Ecossolies* and Nantes Metropolis, which funded the production of a documentary film presenting the network. It is presented systematically during official conferences, in press and website articles, and has become a kind of emblematic local successful project.

Dissemination of an innovative concept generally faces resistance at local and national levels. In order to defend social, economical and/or cultural changes they promote, innovations may rely on the expertise of researchers and specialists. For instance, the *Time for Roof* cofounders regularly organise public events to which they invite experts (sociologists, economists, doctors, etc.), in order to make intergenerational cohabitation recognized as a sustainable alternative in the care of dependent elderly people.

Expertise can be external, as for Time for Roof, or developed as an internal tool. For instance, the City of Nantes has a Policies Evaluation Service (Mission Evaluation Publiques), playing a role of expertise body. It gives resources and capacities, in terms of policies' analysis and reforms' implementation, that many French cities do not have. It played an important role in the emergence of the experimentation and in its diffusion (conducting evaluations, spreading results via publications and public conferences).

Dissemination strategies aiming at influencing the institutional architecture of local welfare systems and governance may consist in integrating social innovations into local mainstream policies. In a context of funding scarcity, this is the strategy chosen by the

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City of Nantes in order to disseminate the initiative in all Nantes districts. Nevertheless, it raises the question of to what extent it may have a "mainstreaming" effect and influence modifications in the welfare system or, on the contrary, lead to the social innovation being emptied of its contents by stronger routine professional practices.

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