

## A few notes about the context of homeless research in France

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First let us mention briefly the main research work carried out in France on the issue of homelessness.

After the ground-breaking work by Vexliard in the 50s (see for example *Le clochard*, [The Tramp], 1957), during the 1980s some isolated studies focused on the homeless: for example, the ethnographic work carried out by Patrick Declerck in 1983 for his DEA (a post-graduate diploma) on “the dropouts living in the Parisian subway”, the survey by the statistical service of the Social Affairs Ministry (at the time the SESI, now the DREES) conducted by Dan Ferrand-Bechmann on the clients of the bigger charities; the PhD of Dominique Lebleux (1987) on the conflicts between volunteers and professionals of social reintegration with regard to a hostel for ex-convicts. The only statistical data were those published by the SESI on shelters funded by the State; these data have been available since 1982. In 1991 the *Plan Urbain* (the research section of the Ministry of Infrastructure, Urban Planning, Construction, and Architecture, created in 1984) gave a decisive impulse to this field of research thanks to the programme entitled “Public Spaces: the social construction of urbanity, the management of public space”. The research conducted was of a sociological or ethnological nature.

The *Plan Urbain*, alongside another body with a similar function, the *Plan construction and architecture*, were replaced in 1999 by the PUCA, the *Plan Urbanisme, Construction et Architecture* (Plan for Urban planning, Construction and Architecture). In 1999 the PUCA launched a research programme on “The homeless, representations, trajectories, and public policies” (*Les "SDF", représentations, trajectoires et politiques publiques*), which brought together about twenty research teams and culminated in an international conference in 2003.

Research at INED, of a statistical but also of a qualitative nature, has been carried out since 1993, at the instigation of the National Council of Statistical Information (CNIS), after several administrative reports on the issue of poverty and housing problems were published. The same survey method was also used in the national survey conducted by INSEE in 2001. Qualitative studies have also been conducted, some in association with the *Plan Urbain*.

Starting from the 1990s, several students wrote reports or PhDs on this issue (for example Girola, Amistani, Lanzarini, Pichon, Teissonnières, Jouenne, Bresson-Boyer, Dambuyant-Wargny...), as did researchers (for example Gaboriau, Terrolle, Bordreuil, Guillou, Laé, Memmi...), often with funding from the *Plan Urbain* or the PUCA, or during "research-action" operations (research combined with a programme); persons involved as actors in the services helping the homeless, in different positions, conducted research on their own account (Damon, Declerck); journalists (such as Prolongeau) looked into the subject and published books, as did members of NGOs and former homeless people. In *La misère du monde*, published in 1993 and edited by Pierre Bourdieu, two of the interviews are conducted with homeless people. At the European level, the first report of the FEANTSA was published in 1992 (Daly, 1992) and a report on the homeless was published in 1993 by the Council of Europe. The early 1990s thus saw the emergence of homelessness as a subject for research. The larger NGOs, for their part, have funded research institutes to produce statistical surveys and studies (for example, between 1993 and 1998 the FNARS (a federation of NGOs) funded

an annual CRÉDOC survey on experts' opinion about whether services match needs, and in 2001 another one on the users of services provided by the NGOs which are members of the FNARS, conducted by Serge Paugam with the *Observatoire sociologique du changement*).

The beginning of the 2000s was also marked by the INSEE national survey in 2001 and the publication of numerous articles using it as a source, hence by a development of publications based on quantitative data. The FNARS, the MIPES (an observatory on poverty in the Paris region), the DRASSIF (a public agency at the regional level) have collaborated to fund a statistical survey "on a given night" in the shelters of the Ile-de-France region (the Paris region). However a large proportion of the research funded by the *Plan Urbain* at the turn of the century is of a qualitative nature.

*2.1 Main theories in the country: what are the main theories (related to homelessness and poverty) which supported your own research? Are there some other theories very much in use in homelessness research in your country?*

Theoretical references:

For the research conducted at INED, we have mostly used the approach of Pierre Bourdieu (for example in the book directed by Firdion and Marpsat, *La rue et le foyer*, chapters 7 and 9; and in Marpsat, Vanderburg, 2004, *Le monde d'Albert la Panthère*) as developed by Jean-Marie Firdion in his text presented separately (and distributed at the London workshop). Maryse Marpsat also used the notion of career (Goffman, Becker) in Marpsat, Vanderburg, 2004. The research conducted following the first call for proposals of the *Plan Urbain* also used the notion of career. Other researchers have based their approach, for example, on *individualisme méthodologique* (Damon, 2002, p. 8), or on Weber's comprehensive approach (Paugam, 2005, p. 67).

The notion of exclusion was extensively discussed in France in the early 1990s (including in the proclamations of candidates for the 1995 presidential election) and used with variable definitions (see for example Benamouzig 1998, Paugam (ed) 1996 etc.) but agreeing more or less, by the mid 1990s, on the idea that exclusion was a process rather than a situation, and that the phenomenon was multidimensional. The dimensions listed vary with the authors but always contain a monetary dimension, and generally a relational dimension and one relative to citizenship. This idea of multidimensionality is also encountered in numerous studies on poverty conducted in the years 1985-1990 (as shown by the long list of the reports which mention it).

Other rival notions coexist, such as those defined by Castel (*La désaffiliation*) and Paugam (social disqualification). As regards poverty, various definitions of "statistical" poverty (monetary, in living conditions, subjective) have also emerged.

*2.2 What would you say about the relationship with the research in other countries and the EU programmes in your own research? In homeless research in your country?*

The notion of exclusion, which first appeared in France in the 60s, has developed in other countries through the international agencies and in particular those linked to the European community (via the funding of various programmes on poverty and Jacques Delors' French

presidency of the European Union from 1985 to 1995) and with the International Labour Organization (in which a working group examined the definitions of exclusion and the extension of this notion to developing countries).

The work of the FEANTSA (created in 1989) was known by the CNIS group, but to undertake a statistical survey (remember that France is not a country of register-based statistics) the INED researchers applied a sampling methodology based primarily on the one implemented in the United States, the only country at that time which seemed to have reliable sampling techniques for the homeless population.

As regards the *Plan Urbain*, its studies were also partly informed by the American studies through the participation of the American researchers Kim Hopper and Anne Lovell.

For INSEE, the European decisions (Laeken indicators) have modified the measurement of (monetary) poverty by including imputed rents in income (for owner-occupiers), which modifies the structure of the poor population.

*2.3 Theories, concepts... : structural vs. agency, social vs “qualitative” approaches etc.; homelessness and social exclusion, social capital, social vulnerability... With which other social issues is the issue of homelessness associated? Definitions of homelessness used in your research, in research on homelessness in your country...*

The definitions of homelessness adopted by the various research currents depend to a certain extent on the origin of the research. Statisticians, who need to find ways to investigate a population which is difficult or impossible to reach by usual survey methods based mainly on the selection of dwellings from a list, prefer the definition by housing situation (see the CNIS classification presented in the French Paris paper on definitions and in the French long paper for Milan). The researchers working for the *Plan Urbain* adopted an approach based on the visibility of the persons in public space. Other authors have worked on the constitution of the category (Bresson-Boyer, 1994, Damon, 1995).

Depending on the discipline and the institutional membership of the authors, some of the approaches systematically take into account the structural origin of homelessness (labour market, housing market, migration policies, policies dealing with the mentally ill, convicts, young people in institutions), even though this is sometimes no more than a ritual reverence before approaching the subject of the individual trajectories which, in a given context, led to homelessness; others focus on the psychological aspect (Askévis, Guillou) or the social links and biographical watersheds (Paugam)

*2.4 The relationships between methods and theories: the theoretical basis / implications of methods etc.*

In INED's research, the theory of capital (Bourdieu) has been used together with various methods of data analysis, correspondence analysis (*La rue et le foyer* chapter 9) or logistic analysis (*idem*). Even though the structural aspects have been taken into account, they have not been systematically studied, except in a draft chapter for an international publication (Firdion in Snow *and al.*, work in progress).

The sample survey method can be used to study trajectories in detail and to test complex hypotheses, but not to obtain figures for small areas. This could be related to the fact that emergency and long-stay shelters are funded by the central government and not by local authorities.

*2.5 How research on homelessness is determined / inter-related with the construction of the problem of homelessness*

*2.6 The relationships between the theoretical approaches (the theoretical choices) and policy concern (for instance: reintegration vs crisis management; de-institutionalization...; relationships with programme evaluation etc.)*

Prior to the work of the CNIS homeless group, numerous reports had called for homelessness as well as other marginal housing situations to be better understood, thus confirming the approach that focuses primarily on housing issues. The issue of de-institutionalization was put forward by psychiatrists (Kovess and Mangin-Lazarus), along with the question of access to care for the homeless mentally ill, whose proportion, though higher than in the housed population, was nevertheless estimated to be relatively low, if depression is excluded.

The approach in terms of individual trajectories (even seen in a global context) may correspond more to a view in terms of prevention focusing on targeted populations; the contextual approach corresponds to a view of prevention through action on macroeconomic variables (employment, housing) and the approach based on enumerations accompanied by limited data corresponds to a focus on emergency needs and numbers of available beds.

*2.7 The policy framework and political arena of research: policy demand; the role of NGOs in research and the public debate on homelessness etc.*

Research of the kind that was presented by Denmark within our network, based on the national identity number and the merging of datafiles, may be less well received in France. Indeed, after the 39-45 war and the constitution of files of Jewish people, and since the Safari crisis which gave birth to the CNIL (the French data protection authority), the French are rather reluctant to use their national identification number (the NIR) to merge files of different origins.

Let us mention briefly the Safari crisis (this part is based on Emilie Armatte's DEA, *Data protection rights: 30 years of debate*, René Descartes-Paris V university). The French "Data protection" act of 1978 led to the creation of the CNIL, the body responsible for enforcing the principles promulgated by the law. According to E. Armatte, the 1978 law was voted in a general climate of hostility to social control. The fear of social control focused on the use of the computer, a new tool at that time. Several projects crystallized the protests: the AUDASS operation (computer-aided management of DDASS files of social welfare beneficiaries) and in particular the GAMIN project (concerning pediatric medical care dispensed by the PMI, a public agency), designed to track down "high-risk" situations but perceived as presenting risks of labeling, was strongly contested by doctors and social workers and prompted a sharp reaction from the CFDT trade union. The GAMIN project was eventually abandoned. But the real catalyst of the law was the SAFARI crisis (a computerized system for administrative files and the directory of individuals). The aim was to computerize the national directory of

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1. Michel Foucault publishes *Surveiller et punir* in 1975 ( Gallimard).

individuals managed by INSEE and to use the identification number (aka “Social Security number”) in all French administrations. In an article of March 21st, 1974, the newspaper *Le Monde* claimed that Safari would be “a manhunt against French people” (*la chasse aux Français*).

A data protection commission was then set up and issued a report in September 1975 with a view to preparing a data protection bill. Public opinion was mobilized on questions of individual privacy and on questions connected to business confidentiality. The data protection act of 6 January 1978 provided for the creation, among other things, of an independent authority, the CNIL (national data protection authority) in charge of enforcing the principles of the law. However, sensitivity to the recording of information on the population seems to have toned down somewhat in public opinion, since tax files were linked with those of the welfare agencies at the end of the 1990s to fight against tax evasion.

In France, after the impetus provided by the work of the *Plan Urbain*, it was the NGOs who asked (within the CNIS) for a statistical survey to be carried out on homelessness, in order to obtain precise figures to back up their demands. The 1990s were also marked by the development of an expert status for the NGOs: they were invited to sit on numerous authorities such as the CNIS, the *Conseil Economique et Social* (Economic and Social council), the *Observatoire national de la pauvreté et de l'exclusion sociale* (national observatory of poverty and social exclusion) etc.; they published their own figures and research on the issues of poverty and homelessness; they adopted an attitude of either collaboration or contestation with respect to the authorities (depending on the NGOs concerned and the moment in time). Charities, which represent a major proportion of the service providers, are mostly federated in the FNARS, which is a member of the FEANTSA. This grouping facilitates contacts for surveys based on the use of services. Most of the associations which manage services receive government funding for their activity.

The media (Damon, 2002, p. 118-123) are more interested in the issue than in the past but tend to focus on the spectacular. Their interest increases when the first homeless person dies of cold in the winter, but decreases when the warm weather returns.

## 2.8 Organization of research: the actors of research; the main sources of funding etc.

French research on homelessness is funded in several ways:

Among the academics and the researchers of the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS): numerous qualitative studies, often conducted by young people preparing their PhD, have been conducted with a significant personal contribution and limited financial means; others have been funded by the *Plan Urbain* or as part of research-actions (funded by authorities or NGOs); finally the FNARS federation has sponsored several surveys, notably the one conducted by the OSC laboratory with funding from the *Plan Urbain*.

Institutes such as CRÉDOC or the CSA have also been funded by the FNARS. Other NGOs also use the services of private institutes. The file of persons accommodated by the Lorraine shelters (Lorraine is a French region), more a management tool than a research tool, was financed by the DDASS (a public agency) and set up by the ORSAS. Furthermore, NGOs sometimes employ young researchers for a few months.

Regarding INED research: this institute benefits from a favourable position in that only "external costs" (i.e., not the salaries of its permanent members) must be financed, and not in their totality since INED has its own budget. It therefore enjoys a degree of independence with respect to demand (relating to the topics covered for example). It has nevertheless received financial support for homeless surveys from several ministries (Housing, Social Affairs, Interministerial Agency for Urban Affairs and Social Development), from INSERM, CNAF and the Abbé Pierre Foundation.

The INSEE has a relatively similar mode of funding. The 2001 survey was funded by this institute but also by the relevant Ministries, by the CNAF and by the national observatory of poverty and social exclusion.

The INED and INSEE interviewers were professionals, with a few exceptions during the first INED survey where we tested other types of interviewer (social or voluntary workers, etc.)

To sum up, a few characteristics of French research on homelessness:

- qualitative and quantitative work, sometimes (but generally not) conducted by the same teams;
- statistical studies based on sample surveys rather than on exhaustive records (with the exception of the ES survey), thus giving a lot of information to test hypotheses but no figures for small geographical areas;
- a degree of independence in working hypotheses, methods and analyses;
- but only the large institutes have enough funding and an interviewers' network to conduct large-scale statistical surveys, unlike the National Centre for Scientific Research where detailed qualitative studies and smaller surveys are nevertheless conducted.
- NGOs who have developed a form of expertise, are listened to by authorities and the media (maybe more so than researchers), are well organized in a federation, obtain funding for research (for example through calls for research proposals), delegate to professionals (either institutes or laboratories) while exercising a degree of control over the questioning, but who have agreed to collaborate in the surveys of Institutes such as INED or INSEE.

## References

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