Chapter 8: From Groups to Individuals? The Making of Target Publics in the French Administration of Low-Rent Housing

Marine Bourgeois

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Résumé en français

Les transformations contemporaines de l'action publique agissent tant sur son organisation institutionnelle (décentralisation, territorialisation, redistribution des compétences) que sur ses contenus (multiplication des textes juridiques et réglementaires, opacité des orientations officielles). Elles consacrent l'intervention de nouveaux acteurs et de nouveaux échelons, qui complexifient les scènes locales et modifient les rapports de pouvoir. Selon de nombreux auteurs, elles contribuent à l'individualisation des politiques sociales et au renforcement des marges de manœuvre des agents de terrain. Dans ce chapitre, nous proposons une discussion critique de l'hypothèse d'individualisation de l'action publique, à partir du cas des attributions de logements sociaux. Prenant appui sur une enquête ethnographique comparative, qui combine entretiens semi-directifs et observations directes, nous analysons la manière dont se construisent les publics cibles du logement social. Le chapitre se structure en deux temps. Nous montrons d'abord que l'imprécision des objectifs de la politique dessine un cadre d'action minimal, voué à être réinterprété et reformulé par les acteurs locaux. Tout en reconnaissant les spécificités des territoires, ce cadre définit un champ des possibles en matière d'action publique. Dans les marges d'autonomie dont ils disposent, les *policy-makers* élaborent des règles du jeu, énoncées comme des stratégies de peuplement et appuyées par des instruments spécifiques. Ces dernières peuvent être formelles ou informelles, explicites ou implicites. Elles organisent, à un premier niveau, la distribution spatiale des individus. La force des typifications collectives et des routines bureaucratiques assurent, à un second niveau, leur concrétisation. Le chapitre présente deux résultats majeurs. Premièrement, la comparaison met au jour des régularités contre-intuitives dans la mise en œuvre des politiques du logement. En effet, malgré des contextes sociaux et urbains très contrastés, des règles de peuplement similaires sont observées, ciblant des populations « fragiles » et immigrées, dans des quartiers et des immeubles jugés peu attractifs. Élaborées dans un cas par le bailleur social, dans l'autre par la municipalité, ces règles renvoient à un souci commun de maîtrise du peuplement. De ce point de vue, la territorialisation des politiques publiques ne produit pas nécessairement de la différenciation locale. L'enquête ethnographique donne également à voir des catégories institutionnelles, fondées sur des critères de classe, de race et de genre. Ces catégories sont réactualisées au guichet, en fonction des multiples combinaisons qu'elles forment quand elles entrent en interactions. Elles peuvent être renégociées, précisées, nuancées voire contournées. Pour autant, le traitement des dossiers n'est pas aléatoire : des régularités institutionnelles sont observées derrière la casuistique bureaucratique, qui renvoient à des formes de jurisprudence territorialisée, orchestrée par des acteurs locaux. Celles-ci sont le fruit de plusieurs facteurs, parmi lesquels le contexte organisationnel joue un rôle central. La valorisation de la proximité et de la gestion au cas par cas des situations conduit les organisations à laisser d'importantes marges de manœuvre aux agents, qui rendent possible des jeux avec les règles. En parallèle, elles instaurent des dispositifs de contrôle qui visent à maintenir ces jeux à l'état de dérogations. Les accommodements sont ainsi anticipés et organisés par la hiérarchie. Inversement, les savoirs expérientiels émergeant du terrain peuvent servir de supports aux règles institutionnelles. Il n'y a donc pas d'opposition entre les règles construites par les responsables organisationnels d'une part, et les logiques d'action qui orientent les pratiques d'autre part. Finalement, il semble qu'il n'y ait pas d'incompatibilité entre l'idée d'un « gouvernement individualisé des conduites » et l'observation de régularités dans les effets des politiques publiques.

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Abstract

Recent transformations of public policies have led to the emergence of new coordination measures for local governments and to changes in the role of street-level bureaucrats. Previous researches highlight a trend toward individualization of social policies and ever-greater autonomy of bureaucrats. On the basis of an ethnographic study conducted in low-rent housing organizations in two French cities, this chapter provides a critical discussion of the general hypothesis of social policies' individualization. Through extensive interviews and direct observations of agents at work, it looks into the way target publics are defined and identified in practice. It considers the processes of qualification and categorization according to which frontline workers make their selection, questioning boundaries that are drawn by the administration between the *insiders* and the *outsiders* of social housing. This chapter first analyses how housing authorities elaborate rules to deal with legal uncertainties. It also shows how these categories are taken up and actualized by bureaucrats in their everyday practices. More broadly, it sheds light on regularly occurring selection mechanisms which led to a deeper understanding of individualization's process.

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8.1 Introduction

Social housing[1] affects household budget and has a deep impact on personal lives. As part of the Welfare state, it targets people whose incomes do not exceed certain limits. Social housing policies are supposed to reduce inequalities, and fight against social exclusion and spatial segregation. In 2014, waiting lists for social housing in France gather above 1,5 million people. This number has grown twice over the past 20 years (Union Sociale pour l'Habitat, 2014). How do policy-makers determine target publics in practice? How do they sort out and select applications? This chapter looks into the way tenants in social housing are identified and selected within a large pool of applicants. Thus, it addresses the question of symbolic boundaries that are drawn by the administration between the *insiders* and the *outsiders* of low-rent housing.

The legal definition of eligibility criteria and selection principles constitutes the first level of housing policy regulation. Eligibility depends on having valid identity papers and not exceeding income caps. Social housing selection is based upon two principles: the right to housing and the principle of social mix. The right to housing, introduced in May 1990 by the Besson Act, states that "every person or family experiencing particular difficulties, because of the insufficiency of their resources or their conditions of existence has the right to a public assistance from the government […] to obtain access to a decent and independent home or to maintain themselves there". In addition, social landlords[2] have to foster social mix in their housing stock. As a legal principle, social mix found its basis in the 2000 SRU Act[3], spreading the "burden" of disadvantaged people in social housing between cities. But this concept remains vague and ambiguous. It is understood in many ways, including a mix of family types, ages, jobs, incomes, race and ethnicity (Kirszbaum, 2008). In this regard, formal rules do not produce strong discontinuities and strict boundaries. They contribute to dig a gap between "policy as written" and "policy as performed" (Lipsky, 1980: xvii). It results that HLM agents have a significant leeway in their working practices. How do they take into account the targets defined at the superior level? Do their interactions with beneficiaries redefine these targets?

[1] In France, social housing is also called HLM housing. HLM means *Habitat à Loyer Modéré* (homes at a moderate rent).

[2] The social landlords are the key actors in social housing chain. They own 16 per cent of French principal residences, housing ten million people. Two types of social landlords should be distinguished: public organizations called *offices publics HLM* (OPHLM) and private organizations called *entreprises sociales pour l'habitat*. The *offices publics* are attached to local governments whereas the *entreprises sociales pour l'habitat* are commercial companies.

[3] Loi Solidarité et renouvellement urbain.

Two main orientations can be distinguished in the French literature on social housing. Firstly, in organizational sociology and policy analysis, scholars focus on local systems of social housing to shed light on regulation processes and governance arrangements. They examine the relations between group stakeholders with divergent interests. Bourgeois (1996) argues that public social landlords are primarily concerned with politics favouring their voters whereas private social landlords prioritize applicants with the most resources. Sociologists and political scientists have pointed out the opacity and complexity of the allocation process. They emphasize on the leeway of street-level bureaucrats and power relations (Houard, 2009; Ball, 2012). Secondly, much of the literature in urban sociology centres on the discriminatory and segregation effects of housing policies. Research examines how social landlords and local governments use the principle of social mix to develop informal strategies of creaming. Law is being used to limit the access of some groups to social housing, especially poor and racialized minorities. This results in exclusion (Ballain & Benguigui, 1995; Tissot, 2005), discrimination (Tanter & Toubon, 1999; Kirszbaum & Simon, 2001; Sala Pala, 2013) and concentration of vulnerable groups in underprivileged areas (Pan Ké Shon, 2009; Weill, 2013). Researches establish clear connections between social mix and discrimination. But they have not precisely explored the regulatory mechanisms that govern housing policy. We know little about how daily practices shape the allocation process. Thus, I argue that policy analysis can benefit from street-level policy analysis and ethnographic approaches, thereby laying the groundwork for a new theoretical perspective on regulation and policy implementation, focused on bureaucratic encounters between the Welfare state and the public.

8.1.1 Understanding the Making of Target Publics through Street-Level Work

Since the early 1990s, street-level bureaucracy has known significant development into the analysis of policy implementation (Brodkin, 2011). Studies specifically investigate the impacts of the transformations of public services and the Welfare state on daily practices. Those researches focused on education, health and social policies, exploring several organizational structures and categories of tasks (Hupe & Buffat, 2014). Initially based on agency-centered sociological and rational choice-institutional premises, street-level bureaucracy has been revisited and fitted with other theoretical perspectives, such as Goffman's interactionism and Bourdieu's analysis of domination (Dubois, 2010a). The core argument introduced by Lipsky was that street-level bureaucrats actively make policy: "I argue that the decisions of street level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out" (Lipsky, 1980: xiii).

Street-level bureaucrats are responsible for translating clients into institutional categories: “it is only in the interaction between caseworkers and clients that formal policy comes to life” (Rice, 2013: 1039). They often exercise significant discretion playing with rules and procedures despite their subordinate position: “neither impersonal bureaucrats nor standardized clients exist: only social agents with individual personalities who, within certain conditions and limits, are required to play the role of the impersonal or standardized bureaucrat or client” (Dubois, 2010a: 3). This research contributes to the foundation of bottom-up approaches to policy analysis, and argues that policy cannot be understood simply as a set of objectives or decisions, but must also be recognized as practices.

Most studies focus on variations at street-level while seeking factorial explanations at that same level, particularly individual characteristics and personal view of the actors involved depending on social properties, professional trajectories and job conceptions, organizational positions and generational membership (Dubois, 2010a; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Watkins-Hayes, 2009). They show that caseworkers’ attitudes toward policy goals vary empirically and influence street-level work. Ingram and Schneider (1993) highlight that clients belonging to positively constructed groups will receive better treatment than clients who belong to negatively constructed groups for reasons of “deservingness” and of political legitimacy. In sum, public policies operate through the creation of categories, grouping persons distinguished as eligible for benefits and burdens. Different target groups are treated differently according to their political power and social construction. In this regard, the chapter draws on the street-level bureaucracy literature in order to discuss Ingram and Schneider’s ideas.

However, research often overlooks the fact that implementation conditions vary across local systems in terms of institutional design of organizations and of relationships between actors. Within the same policy area, differences may exist in the level of discretion that is available to implementing agencies and their staff depending on the city. Front-line practices have to be analyzed in relation with the social context in which they take place. Economic crisis, decentralization and privatisation have led to the intervention of new actors and the emergence of new co-ordination measures for local governments. A loosening of state constraints on individuals and organizations is also observed (Dupuy & Pollard, 2014). This results in major changes in the role of street-level bureaucrats. They are often seen to assume a greater variety of tasks, such as developing new instruments to deal with clients and engage in the formulation of organizational goals (Durose, 2011; Ellis, 2011; Henman & Fenger, 2006). A significant set of studies highlights the general trend toward individualization of public policy and ever-greater

autonomy of street-level bureaucrats, replacing an automatic impersonal bureaucracy with a more individual approach characterized by more personal conversations about clients' lives and behaviours (Achtenberg & al. 2013; Astier, 2000; Ferge, 1997; Lima, 2013). Dubois (2010b) shed light on a new mode of governance, which he refers to as an "individualized government of conducts".

8.1.2 Explaining Local Regularities in the Era of Social Policies' Individualization

As the previous section outlined, research on social housing suggest that housing policy generates inequalities and discriminations at the local level. These findings were observed in different urban contexts. Are these results in line with the process of social policies' individualization? Can a case-by-case treatment produce similarities from one city to another? Resolving this puzzle requires to investigate how the combined observation of institutional relations, organizational contexts and individual representations produce an understanding of working practices and regulatory mechanisms.

The chapter is organized along two lines. First, I analyse how social housing actors elaborate rules to deal with the uncertainty of the existing legal framework. Supported by policy instruments, these rules seek to organize spatial distribution of social groups based on several criteria, which bring out institutional categories. The categories of "immigrants" or "poor" are invariably considered as threatening even though they are produced by different types of actors, depending on local power relations. This results in a hierarchy of customers and housing units, which determines the type of accommodations bureaucrats can offer. Second, I analyze how these categories are actualized in micro-level daily interactions. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the regular occurrences of selection mechanisms that inform policy and governing.

8.1.3 Fieldwork

The empirical material is based on extended ethnographic surveys combining direct observations and in-depth semi-structured interviews with members of local decision bodies, managers and street-level bureaucrats from public and private social landlords. The observation of working practices consisted in following bureaucrats in their daily practices: meeting with applicants, visiting apartments and attending selection commissions. Follow-up interviews included open-ended questions about agents' perceptions of clients, their working practices, their application of rules and procedures. This methodology has been applied in two social housing organizations located in two different cities. Cities were selected in order to capture

varied land prices, socioeconomic characteristics and local governance settings (see table 8.1). The first part of the survey focused on a housing company in a medium-sized French city of 400,000 inhabitants renamed Mediumcity[4]. Between November 2012 and January 2013, I followed two HLM agents in charge of renting out 1,000 housing units each. In addition, interviews were conducted with all the employees of the company. Between November 2013 and February 2014, the second part of the fieldwork was conducted in a public HLM company in a small-size city of 130,000 inhabitants, renamed Smalltown. On the field, I introduced myself as a PhD student in political science or sociology, aiming to understand how social housing allocations concretely work. For clients, I was an intern learning about sales agents. This position allowed me to stay behind the street-level bureaucrats and to take notes during the interviews.

Table 8.1 The two case studies

	Organization A (ESH)	**Organization B (OPHLM)**
City	**Mediumcity**	**Smalltown**
Local context	≈ 200,000 people. Unemployment rate (15-64 years old): 10%. Percentage of single-parent families: 13%. Percentage of immigrants: 6%. Percentage of social housing: 23%.	≈ 60,000 people. Unemployment rate (15-64 years old): 16%. Percentage of single-parent families: 19%. Percentage of immigrants: 11%. Percentage of social housing: 30%.
Local agencies	Three local agencies (A1, A2 et A3). 5 HLM agents.	No local agency. 6 HLM agents.
Characteristics of social housing	A1: ≈ 2,500 housing units. A2: ≈ 3,600 housing units. A3: ≈ 2,500 housing units.	≈ 9,000 housing units.
Characteristics of social housing allocation	The allocation commission meets weekly in the head office building. Chaired by the general director in charge of renting, it is composed of six permanent members. In 2011, the committee examined 3,412 applications.	The allocation commission meets bi-weekly. Chaired by the general director in charge of renting, it is composed of six members, always including a tenant representative and local elected officials of the commune where the home involved was located. In 2012, the committee examined 3,752 applications.

[4] The names of sites, organizations and individuals have been changed in order to ensure the anonymity of interviewees.

8.2 The Institutional Construction of Target Publics

In social housing policies, the policymaker entrusts social landlords and members of allocation commissions with the power to select tenants[5]. But as we previously mentioned, formal rules are vague and contradictory, leaving substantial space for the autonomy of local actors. "Secondary norms of application" (Lascoumes, 1990) are therefore created through the interactions with clients. They are closely linked to the local actors' capacity for action and the power relations established between them. Thus, analyzing local configurations will allow us to identify the scope of social landlords' autonomy and to explain the logic that underlies categories, according to which applications are selected. Based on contemporary studies of public policy and local governments (Douillet et al., 2014), I make the hypothesis that allocation rules vary locally, depending on the kind of institutions which design them.

8.2.1 Who Defines Target Publics?

Contextualized analysis describes environment and power relations that constrain HLM organizations in the implementation of social housing allocation. Several mechanisms in the production of social landlords' discretion are observed: the absence of economic constraints for the agencies on the one hand; a weak political leadership in housing issues on the other. Based on my fieldwork, I identify two different cases summarized in the table below.

Table 8.2 The Construction of Social Landlords' Discretion and its Variations

		Scope of bureaucratic discretion
Organization A	**Mediumcity** Agencies A1, A2 and A3	***Very little discretion***
Organization B	**Smalltown** No local agencies	***Significant discretion***

The first constraint which reduces bureaucratic discretion of social landlords is an economic one, which is associated with the principle of reservation. In France, reservation implies that as a counterpart to their financial investment in affordable housing construction, several actors are authorized to name applicants in estates to which they contributed - specifically the Mayor of the city where the housing unit is located ; the members of Action logement reserving up to 50

[5] In France, the application for social housing passes through the hands of the receiving agent, then on to the social landlords and, finally, is before the allocation commission. All allocation commissions have six members, plus the Mayor of the city where the home is located (or its representative) who has a casting vote.

per cent of the vacancies in social housing for employees[6]; and the departmental prefect who, as local state representative, is responsible for housing the most vulnerable groups, quarter of vacancies for this purpose. Up to 5 per cent of social housing is also reserved by the prefecture for civil servants. One or several files are chosen by the reserving actors and sent to social landlords to be examined by HLM agents. In view of the issues at stake, the applications going through this channel are rarely rejected. So, in this case, the allocation committee can be compared with a simple recording chamber (Bourgeois, 2013; Sala Pala, 2013). In both case studies, the reservation rate is very low: it represents fifteen per cent of social housing in Mediumcity, and it only concerns new built projects in Smalltown.

The second constraint is political. It has to do with the key role of local authorities in the allocation process: in their ability to hand out building permits and in their financial participation to the housing effort. According to this, social landlords have to contend with them. However, the intervention of local politicians varies strongly from one area to another. In Mediumcity, the municipal service in charge of housing is central in the architecture of the allocation process. It is responsible for file processing and pre-selecting applicants. Civil servants send one file per vacant unit, and sort out files based on a scoring grid previously defined by local actors, mainly social landlords and elected officials[7]. The HLM agents only come in afterwards by organizing a "discovery" interview and a visit of the apartment. In light of the information provided, the chair of the commission either confirms or rejects the allocation. This local configuration significantly reduces the work of social landlords and, therefore, most of the bureaucratic discretion that would allow them to intervene in the spatial distribution of social groups. In Smalltown, power relations between local authorities and HLM organizations are more balanced. Bureaucrats register files, receive customers, make housing suggestions and organize viewings. The degree of discretion for social landlords is higher, albeit limited by the political requirements expressed by local governments through the allocation commission. Indeed, elected officials are permanent members of the commission through which the local authority can act directly, claiming "pass-through" and issuing vetoes against certain applications. These political interventions are decided on a case-by-case basis. But they follow particular action patterns that reveal clear political priorities. For instance, one of them consist

[6] In France, private employers must deduct 0, 95 per cent from their wages bill to assist the housing effort. In return, they have the possibility to propose candidates.

[7] The scoring grid is based on several criteria which encourage housing for the poor, such as homelessness or housing need, residual costs resulting from rent, precariousness, conditions regarding financial means and case processing times.

in limiting access to people in precarious situations coming from "outside the department". The objective is to avoid the congestion of the municipal social services:

> *"But how do politics interfere here?*
> It is in the CAL (i.e. the allocation commission)! In the CAL, they choose by asking "where are they from? Why did they come here?" And thus… We close the door a bit more than for people who come from… Well if you're coming from out the département, it's a bit hard! (Laughs). I received quite a lot of applications these past days coming from X, Y… Pff… "What are they doing here?" They couldn't fit in there! […] "Why are they coming to Smalltown?" That's what they ask… Because they do not want even more congestion than there is at the Civil Center for Social Action, help entirely going to a population that is difficult to manage, etc. So in the end… Social cases, they say "yes", but you know our quota is met already, we didn't want to get more. So every time, it's "why did they come here?" And when the answer is "They think they have more chances of finding a job here", the economic argument, they say "Well they don't by staying at home!" (*Alexandre, Director-General in charge of renting, Smalltown, November the 29th, 2013*).

In either case, the same type of political constraint is observed. But it results in different forms of bureaucratic discretion, depending on the local context.

8.2.2 Translating Clients into Categories

Social housing allocation is based on local rules that aim to assign the "right" candidate to the "right" place (Morel Journel & Sala Pala, 2011), establishing a social hierarchy of clients and spaces which requires a detailed knowledge of social occupation and estate. This knowledge is asymmetrically shared by social landlords and municipalities. Since they own social housing, HLM organizations have a very precise view on living conditions in their estate, whereas local authorities hold a global view of neighborhood life. The two case studies illustrate contrasting typical situations: the case in which social landlords exercise a significant discretionary power (Smalltown) and the case in which local authorities are extremely present in the allocation process (Mediumcity). In this section, I examine how these configurations are reflected in local rules. To achieve this, I focus on the policy instruments (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007) that evidence local rules and institutional categories.

The case of Smalltown. In Smalltown, "*we try to ensure a well-balanced population, so we don't put too many RSA*[8] *where we could still get another profile*" explained Alexandre, the Director-General in charge of renting in Smalltown. Based on the managers' evaluations of neighborhood life, he creates an Excel spreadsheet to classify social groups and buildings.

> *"How was it built now?*
> It was built by the manager in charge of renting, that's Rose, by the person who takes care of neighborhood life, that's Josiane, by the directors for proximity and recovery, that's it.

[8] RSA means Revenu de Solidarité Active which is an earned income supplement.

> For each address, these four people with their view, they saw that we were trying to pinpoint "so yes, for us, this is a good population, it's quiet or… It's less calm, this type, and so on". So we built it [Excel table] by comparing what they told us and the way it was actually occupied... In fact, each person, each of the four people did this work individually. We shared them afterwards in order to see "I think this address is very attractive, and you estimate that it is moderately attractive, why?" And from the explanations that have been given, we finally managed to agree on a classification" (*Alexandre, Director-General in charge of renting, Smalltown, November the 29th, 2013).*

The organization distinguishes five categories of social housing attractiveness: building can be very attractive, attractive, medium, unattractive or for specific populations. These levels refer to professionals' perceptions of how people live in buildings: "*An attractive building is quiet, calm, with good surroundings, close to the city center, yet it is housing that have sometimes cheaper rents than some housing in poor areas! The rent has nothing to do with that!"* explained an agent. For each level of attractiveness, an indicative target of desired tenants is defined (see table 8.3). These targets mingle references to age (student, retired), socio-professional status (open-ended contract, fixed-term contract, temporary work, active solidarity revenue) and housing situation (out of prison or shelter).

Table 8.3 The building classification in Smalltown

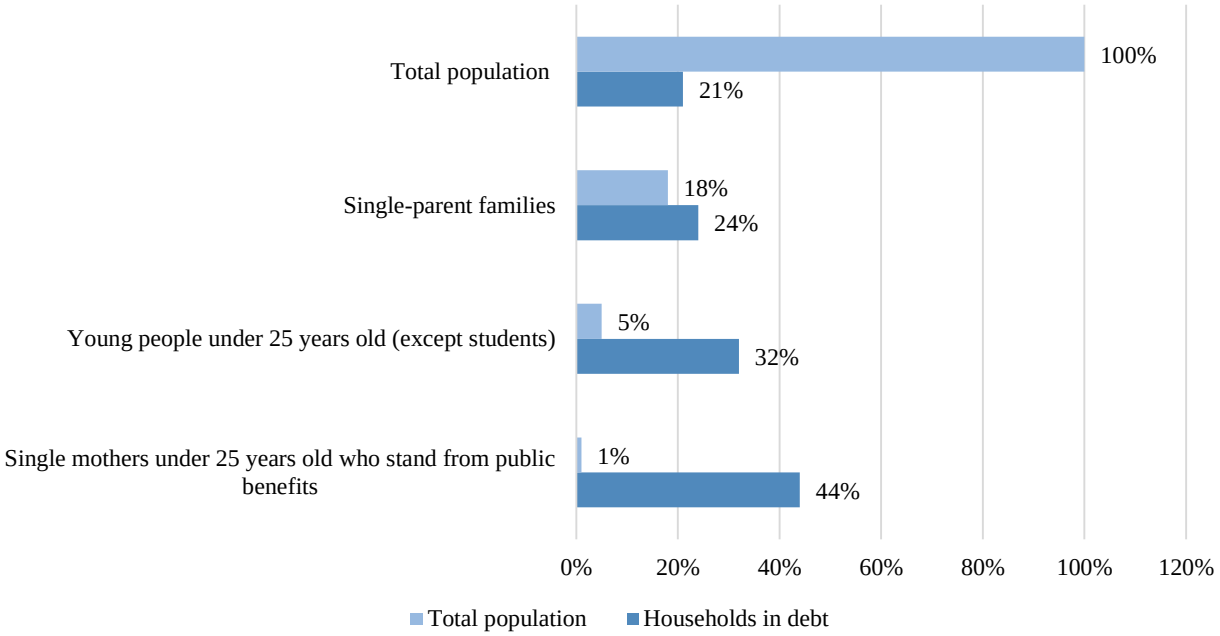
Based on this table, street-level bureaucrats are supposed to identify the buildings that can be offered to the clients they serve. The original colour code serves to implement allocation process as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Attractiveness	Indicative target
Very attractive	Open-ended contracts, retired and students
Attractive	Open-ended contracts, retired and students, fix-termed contracts, temporary work
Medium	Open-ended contracts, retired and students, fix-termed contracts, temporary work, active solidarity revenue
Unattractive	Fix-termed contracts, temporary work, active solidarity revenue
Specific populations	People who are coming out of prison People who are coming out of shelter

This classification is supplemented by a document categorizing "at risk" populations (Caswell et al. 2010). They are those who are likely to stop paying rent or to get involved in neighbourhood disturbances: tenants in debt, young people under twenty-five, the homeless, people who wander from shelter to shelter, clients needing mental health supports, offenders, traffickers, large families, and so on. For social landlords, the risk is two-fold: there is an economic risk and a behavioral risk. The first one is estimated through descriptive statistics (see document 8.1). Statistics create kind of evidence: "*It is a proven fact that young mothers*

earning RSA are the people proportionately more often in debt, compared to other folders" said an agent.

Document 8.1 The statistical identification of "at risk" populations in Smalltown



Source: The social landlord of Smalltown, 2013.

Field: This document compares in debt households with the overall social housing residents in Smalltown.

Example: Single mothers under 25 years old who stand from public benefits, young people under 25 years old (except students) and single-parents families are more often than the others in debt.

The second one is based on field experience and practical knowledge:

> "During the "discovery" interview with some homeless applicants, we realise that they've had an extremely chaotic life, without ever succeeding in keeping an accommodation. Typically, they just wander from shelter to shelter. Well, in these cases, it is more than hazardous […]. You are statistically much more likely to engage in problematic behaviour when your environment is flawed, and vice versa, so it's difficult" (*Alexandre, Director-General in charge of renting, Smalltown, November the 29th, 2013*).

Those instruments provide recommendations for street-level bureaucrats: people depending on social aids shall be given priority on the "medium" or the "unattractive" social housing, whereas employees, retired people and students must be positioned in "attractive" areas. People who fall into the category of "specific" are "assigned" to targeted buildings in order to be "tested":

> "To test them is to assign them to buildings where we have problems, to see how they behave, if they get into trouble. And if after a while they don't create any problems, and if they want to move, then we move them to a nicer place, you see" (*Samia, HLM agent, Smalltown, December the 9th, 2013*).

The allocation process implies a qualification of both clients and buildings. Fieldwork shows a kind of one-to-one equivalent relationship between residency and applicant's quality, which engenders social segregation. Indeed, despite the goal of social mix, the housing company fosters the concentration of similar profiles. Two different arguments are mobilized to justify this strategy. The first argument is a commercial one: they do so in order to address the need to reduce the rate of unoccupied housing and to increase attractiveness of social housing. The organization seeks to restore a sort of "balance" in the spatial distribution of social groups by increasing the percentage of workers: *"we seek to put more workers in good addresses, the idea is to reach 60, 70, 80 per cent of stable people"* explains Alexandre, Director-General of Smalltown housing company in charge of renting. This is a pragmatic reasoning: since "stable people" systematically refuse apartments in disadvantaged areas, the social landlord sets aside units for them in the most attractive neighborhoods:

> "If I put people who receive benefits in the most attractive sectors, then who am I going to assign in disadvantaged urban areas where I have 300 unoccupied apartments? This is not… This is… The person I am going to put there, downtown, where everyone wants to go, they will "take the place" (so to speak) of a person with a good job, a permanent working contract, because the person with a permanent contract, I won't be able to assign them to the deprived neighbourhoods. They won't go, so I will just end up with an unoccupied flat" (*Alexandre, Director-General in charge of renting, Smalltown, November the 29th, 2013*).

The second argument is a managerial one. It is based on the idea that one cannot mix different populations in terms of age, family composition or occupational status with different lifestyles in a same building because mixing is a potential source of conflicts:

> "They'll be mingled with people who have the same behaviors, so we will succeed in having an "osmosis", quotation marks, of lifestyles... In one building, I'll have people that aren't disturbed by nightlife, they will listen to loud music or watch TV until midnight, and we won't be hearing complaints from neighbors because they have the same habits and that's it, it does not disturb them. On the contrary, if I put that kind of person in the building across the street, in the same area, but where we have half the people that are seniors or people who are working and get up in the morning… No! So we try to curb nuisance by specializing our buildings that way. That is to say that in a given building, there is a target customer" (*Alexandre, Director-General of Smalltown, housing company, in charge of renting, November the 29th, 2013*).

These local rules highlight institutional categories based on class, age, address and family composition. They are not communicated to applicants but they are materialized in policy instruments. Field observations also shed light on more discrete categories, especially ethnic categories. Indeed, the social landlord seeks to limit ethnic minorities in specific neighborhoods: to Alexandre, "*below 80 per cent of French, we have to rebalance*". These rules are justified by both commercial and managerial arguments. First, the concentration of

minorities would be driving the French out, and creating more vacancy: *"The issue is French people's perceptions of the neighborhood. When they say "this is an Arab neighborhood", it means I have a problem"* (Alexandre, Director-General of Smalltown Company). Furthermore, the lifestyle of some minorities is perceived as problematic for community life: the "*Africans*", the "*Yugo*" and the "*Kosovars*" are especially targeted. Jean, CEO of the HLM organization, explains that: *"When the state tells us that we have to house the Kosovars, yes we house them but not anywhere. With their lifestyles... Here we talk about how neighbourhoods live, but we must also look at the rents".*

The case of Mediumcity. In Mediumcity, local authorities organize the allocation process. Unlike the social landlord whose purpose is to anticipate the non-payment risk and the risk of neighborhood disturbance, municipal officials seek to maximize the number of proposals for social housing while respecting the priorities established by the elected representatives. However, the spatial distribution of populations remains important for them. Before the selection commission, the HLM organisms make recommendations to officials from the municipal service in order to encourage them to take neighborhood life into account. Data on social occupation is orally shared (by phone or during regular meetings) and represented in the form of an Excel table (see table 8.4).

Table 8.4 The recommendations made by social landlords in Mediumcity

Apartment	Adress	Recommendations
T4	6 square **	Very disturbed stairwell: avoid people who are coming from shelter, put employees.

As we noted above, "at risk" profiles are made visible by the instrument: they are people out of work, people who stand from benefits, single-parent families, persons who are coming out of prison or shelter, homeless people and clients needing mental health support. In the allocation commission, social landlords can also intervene to refuse individual cases or defer them if judged inappropriate in regards to social occupation. The commission can assign those cases to another dwelling, or redirect them to other types of accommodation:

> "We didn't give them [the local authorities] the responsibility to control housing allocation. We keep it! And that, it's through the CAL [*the allocation commission*]. The CAL is not a registration chamber at all. If we don't agree with a profile, we refuse it! "Inadequate housing" for the candidate is an argument when their lifestyle is not consistent with the life of the building... […] The spatial distribution of people stays under our command at all times. We can recommend social support or special needs housing" (*Rozenn, Director in charge of renting, Mediumcity, January the 15th, 2013*).

These categories also refer to local rules targeting the buildings which are perceived as underprivileged and where bureaucrats can no longer house the most disadvantaged people. In applying social mix, actors avoid concentrating poverty. In this organization, social mix is defined in terms of professional status, resources, age and family composition. The underlying rationale is that "living together in harmony" can only be achieved in socially mixed neighborhoods. At this point, we highlight a huge difference in framing between the two case studies, by social landlords and local governments. In Mediumcity, social mix is understood at the building level whereas it is thought at the neighborhood level in Smalltown. In the former case, different profiles of people are mixed in a building; in the latter, they are concentrated in a building. These different strategies depend on targeting and the level of knowledge of actors. Concerning minorities, a policy of non-concentration has been applied in Mediumcity for several years. With the support of local authorities, social landlords blocked applications by the Turkish targeting the South End of Mediumcity. Hence, they aim to counter "cultural isolationism" and "communitarianism"[9]:

> "We have one community, only one, that follows this rationale, and everything is done to counter it, which I repeat whenever I'm facing the Fasild[10] or the Halde[11]. Yes, we assume political responsibility in favor of social mix, and we're not in favor of communitarianism! So we try to avoid ethnic concentration. Because in this case, that's what it is. All neighborhoods or all the cities are ready to receive the entire population. Everywhere, they find social responses and nonprofits responses. And when you're somewhere in Mediumcity, you're never far from the other part of the city. And therefore, for solidarity, there is no need for people to coexist in the same building" (*Christian, the official elected in charge of social housing, Mediumcity, February the 28th, 2012*).

Decided by elected officials, this policy was implemented by both local government and social landlords. It was deleted with the establishment of a single application form for housing which simplifies the categories informing nationalities[12]. The absence of tools to capture ethnic background accelerated the abandonment of the policy.

Finally, the bureaucratic discretion promotes the construction of specific rules related to the spatial distribution of social groups. Based on a hierarchy of both neighborhoods and clients, they are supported by accurate knowledge of social occupation. Knowledge is based on

[9] In France, multiculturalism is tightly associated to "communitarianism" which is seen as a threat to national identity and republican values. It is negatively perceived as the opposite of the French republican "model of integration".

[10] The support Fund for Integration and the Prevention of Discrimination (Fasild) is a public institution that finances operations in favor of the integration of immigrants.

[11] The High Authority to Combat Discrimination (Halde) was created in 2005 and dissolved in 2011. It was competent to address "all forms of discrimination, direct or indirect, prohibited by law or by an international agreement which France is a party".

[12] Loi de mobilisation pour le logement et la lutte contre l'exclusion, 2009.

statistical analysis and field experience, produced by both managers and street-level bureaucrats. It identifies applicants' features in terms of class, race, age and family composition. These criteria are associated with high level of risks. By revealing "at risks" groups, they organize a social and spatial stratification, which provides various strategies for social housing allocation (segregation or diversity, see table 8.5). In the following section, we will see how these rules are applied on the field. Based on street-level bureaucracy studies, we make the hypothesis that institutional categories are renegotiated according to a case-by-case logic.

Table 8.5 Local rules in Smalltown and Mediumcity

"At risks" groups	**Smalltown** The social landlord plays the leading role in the allocation process.	**Mediumcity** The municipal service plays the leading role in the allocation process.
Rules based on social categories ("Unemployed", "people standing on benefits", "under 25 years old", "large families").	**Social segregation** HLM actors seek to reach a kind of "harmony" in their estates by concentrating the same profiles in a building.	**Social mix** HLM actors seek to create social mix in their estates.
Main grounds for justification	**Commercial argument** The specialization of social housing is thought of as a way to fight against housing vacancy. **Managerial argument** A variety of profiles increases the risk of neighbourhood disturbances.	**Integration argument** HLM actors look aim for "harmonious community life". The "ideal stairwell" is characterized by a diversity of profiles.
Rules based on ethnic categories ("Black", "Arab", "Turks", "Yugo").	**Ethnic mix** HLM actors seek to reach ethnic mix in their estates.	**Ethnic mix** HLM actors seek to reach ethnic mix in their estates.
Main grounds for justification	**Argument commercial** Mixing in order to "preserve the residential image" and to avoid the refusal of housing proposals ("letterbox refusals") which slow down the commercialization process. **Managerial argument** Mixing in order to limit neighbourhood disturbances and	**Integration argument** Mixing in order to not contribute to "communitarianism" and groups' exclusion and to avoid the formation of "ghettos".

	unpaid rents (this refers to a "cultural" argument).	

8.3 Redefining Target Publics at the Front-Lines

We have shown how a set of rules and tools, built both by social landlords and local authorities, reduces bureaucratic discretion. However, agents continue carrying out their activities with discretion. "There is always the question of which rules apply in particular situation" and, as Evans and Harris noted, "the elaboration of policy can create greater discretion through the conflict, confusion and imprecision of multiple rules and procedures" (Evans & Harris, 2004: 883, 890). In this regard, street-level bureaucrats have leeway to categorize and select clients. Administrative decisions remain largely based on HLM agents who can escape bureaucratic rules and resist bureaucracy. The Welfare workers can demonstrate flexibility or inflexibility toward claimant. They can be rule-bound or capable of sympathy and empathy. Therefore, the institutional order seems to be precarious and unstable, and could be challenged in ordinary interactions. In this regard, Dubois (2010) argues that there are many dysfunctional elements in the front-desk work. He sheds light on the fragility of bureaucratic roles and shows how institutional identities come to be shaped and transformed in the field. Practices significantly vary from one Welfare office to another, and from one agent to the next. This section aims to test this idea by focusing at the micro level.

8.3.1 Street-Level Bureaucrats' Judgments on Clients

In both case studies, street-level bureaucrats lead an equivalent exercise of qualification and categorization based on practice criteria in order to sort out and select housing applicants. Qualification is based on the information contained in the housing forms and on evidence collected when meeting clients. It is a crucial step to clarify the application file. Background and credit checks fuel discourses and representations that categorize people and produce hierarchies (Eymard-Duvernay & Marchal, 1997). According to social psychology, these operations are used to reduce the uncertainty and to predict individual behaviors (Jenkins, 2000). Judgments made by HLM agents about the applicants result from a body of evidence, especially punctuality for appointments, self-presentation and children's behaviors during the interviews, housing file management. Responding quickly to a housing proposal, bringing all the administrative documents and follow-up calls to bureaucrats are also well considered: "*it means that they're true applicant"*, "*You see those who really want a house compared to others*". Honesty, sincerity and showing goodwill are also valued by street-level bureaucrats.

In particular, they pay attention to the consistency of the client trajectories. “Feeling” and “instinct” are thus put forward as a major professional skill (Valli et al., 2002):

> “When I arrived here, I thought that “everyone is beautiful, everyone is nice, and everyone pays” and that’s because you see files and receive people that you learn to ask the right questions, you learn to... Some addresses speak to you. I don’t know. After, you manage to know when you have people in front of you, when they are confident or… In this case, you dig, you dig, and they contradict each other. Well you know there is a problem. You dig again and you find a debt. Often, when we have doubts, in the end, we always find the... It's always justified when we don’t feel it! So yeah, maybe with a lot of cases, we develop a sort of instinct for all of that” (*Emma, HLM agent, Smalltown, December the 10th, 2013*).

These discourses contain shortcuts and stereotypes through interactions with customers. They bring out practical categories organized around two segments: the risk profiles on the one hand – large families, families of “troublemakers” (identified by their names), homeless people, former inmates, and alcoholics, social cases, people who wander from shelter to shelter, people needing mental health supports, offenders, traffickers; the good candidates on the other hand – workers and retirees. The “good” candidate is distinguished by his quality of good payer, his ability to occupy the housing and to fit in. His individual quality is examining through family standards (married couple with an average number of children), professional norms (employment, regular income) and ways of living (Sala Pala, 2006: 88). Ethnic minorities are often associated to many of the “bad” applicant characteristics: inappropriate, troublemakers, combining social and economic difficulties. These judgments reveal both an essentialisation of difference – “*they occupy their apartment like in their home villages*” - and a negative evaluation of this difference – “*they'll deteriorate housing*” - with a shift from the question of origins to the question of cultural maladjustment (Sala Pala, 2010: 22). Physical attributes and appearance can also be a stigma (Goffman, 1963: 13), resulting in exclusion and discrimination:

> “What matters is less the nationality than the appearance. In X [new housing project], we put Africans dressed in “boubous”[13]. In other buildings, we have already put bearded men and women wearing the burqa. That disturbed existing tenants. What matters is the appearance. So, we don’t put more “boubous” in X. That doesn’t mean that no more Africans are put there” (*Barthelemy, HLM agent, Smalltown, December the 11th, 2012*).

Symbolic boundaries (Lamont & Molnar, 2002: 168-169) made by social actors to categorize people are based on group membership reflecting lifestyles and cultural differences. The process of boundary making reveals ordinary forms of social classification and prioritization. More generally, it aims to anticipate the risks related to outstanding rent and neighborhood disturbances.

[13] A “boubou” is an African traditional clothing.

8.3.2 From Institutional Categories to Practical Categories

The practical categories elaborated at the front-lines do not completely overlap the institutional categories. Actually, many agents reject the general level of the rule and argue for a greater account of their judgment based on the proximity with clients and individual situations. Thus, institutional categories are taken up and actualized in daily micro-level interactions. They are refined and imbued with new meanings. For instance, sales agents in Smalltown make a clear distinction between two types of people who stand from benefits: there are those who deserve to access to housing in a good neighborhood and those who do not deserve it; those who are actively seeking employment and those who rely on social aid. The classic dichotomy between the "good" poor and "bad" poor has been updated on the ground.

> "We must make a distinction. You have people, young or old, who are unemployed or stand on benefits because it suits them, and you have those who don't have a choice: job loss... Here, between us, we make distinctions. I'll treat all housing files similarly, but between someone who has always stood on benefits because it suits them, and as I mentioned, a woman who finds herself alone... I'll make a distinction" (*Emma, HLM agent, Smalltown, December the 10th, 2013*).

These discourses are very widespread among HLM agents, and because the company management allows for bureaucratic discretion and values individual treatment, they lead to specific decisions in practice. If after a face-to-face interview, the agent finds the applicant *"good", "quiet", "who won't be a problem"* (Samia, HLM agent, Smalltown, December the 9th, 2013), he may bypass the rule and house him in an attractive neighbourhood, with the approval of the Director in charge of renting:

> "*The "discovery" interview is still important?*
> It is even more than necessary, it helps us to know families, to know who are in front of us, and if we are more in a so-called "specific" population that must be housed in a specific place, or if we are on household's residential opportunities... If the person is one of our tenants, if they stand on benefits, if they are known to us, and that they want an upper floor... If they don't create problems, it won't be a problem for me! We want to foster loyalty in our clients, someone who pays its rent, who perhaps stands on benefits, but who pays its rent, it's not a problem. There! I'm not saying that they can switch from an "unattractive" area to a "very attractive" one, I don't agree, but it could be to an attractive area, yes!" (*Alexandre, Director-General in charge of renting, Smalltown, November the 29th, 2013*).

Adjustments around the rules also reveal practical combinations of institutional categories on the ground. One example is the Jean Jaures district in Smalltown. It is targeted by a policy restricting the access of blacks to the buildings where they are perceived as too numerous. The Jean Jaures district is the only neighborhood of Smalltown which is concerned by such a policy. But the fieldwork shows that HLM agents are willing to assign black workers there, since the

contractual status of workers - temporary employees, trainees, those with fixed contracts – is supposed to reflect a high level of integration and stability. In this sense, the criteria of class and race cannot be understood in isolation (Kirschenman & Neckerman, 1991). Other interaction effects are observed, such as between class and address:

> "I'm telling you, I've tried ... It depends on individual cases... For large families when I knew it wasn't an option, I didn't start it because I knew that we didn't want to hear "the large families, oh no!" ... But for example, I have already moved in a black man who was working. I put him in Jean Jaures. I put him, and he was accepted because he was working. It depends on the case. Because I felt that the guy, if he works; in the daytime, he works, since he isn't at home..." (*Samia, HLM agent, Smalltown, December the 9th, 2013*).

These findings show that practical categories built in the field are not neutral. They involve hierarchies between social groups resulting in unequal treatments, discriminations and exclusion. They also reveal some regularities in selection mechanisms, criteria which are predominant depending on local configurations.

8.3.3 Questioning the Institutional Order

Finally, I analyze the behaviors of street-level bureaucrats to see if they contribute to weaken or strengthen the institutional order (Barrault, 2011). Two elements are salient on this matter: the attitudes of HLM agents toward rules and the organizational context. Indeed, street-level bureaucrats adopt various behaviors when it comes to implementing allocation policy. In a previous study (Bourgeois, 2013: 73), I identified three types of HLM agents based on to individual attitudes and working practices. First, "loyal" agents completely endorse the registers of justification which underlie local rules (diversity and integration). They are the rule-abiding bureaucrats described by Lipsky. Second, "critical" agents do not accept the rules and try to fight against them by developing resistances and avoidance strategies. Third, "pragmatic" agents apply the rules with detachment[14]. In a more dynamic way, I also show that these behaviors contribute to the reproduction of the institutional order and explain regularities in selection mechanisms.

First, the study shows that "pragmatic" agents are strongly represented in social landlords. Regine, who implemented the policy regarding Turkish people in the South End of Mediumcity between 2001 and 2006, is an archetype of this kind of bureaucrat. As an employee of Smalltown housing company for thirty-two years, she felt that she could not get around the rules: there was no possibility to give her personal opinion on it: *"You don't have to agree or*

[14] This classification can be applied in other policy areas: for instance, Watkins-Hayes (2009) distinguished similarly three kind of social workers.

disagree... You know, when you're an employee, you do what you're told or else you go see elsewhere" (Regine, HLM agent, Mediumcity, January the 14th, 2013). Some agents are openly hostile to the rules, but they are not able to accommodate them. In Smalltown, all street-level bureaucrats obey to the same rules. They are strongly criticized by street-level bureaucrats as a way to classify housing applicants. They are also considered as a barrier to their autonomy in the shape of management tools and rigidity in the choice of future tenants.

> "I think it's a shame to classify everybody but, well, I don't decide. It's true that it's a shame because you have people who... It is not because they stand on benefits that..." (*Samia, HLM agent, Smalltown, December the 9th, 2013*).

Criticism also targets the content of rules. Contradictions between concrete practices and legal priorities are denounced: "*We are going to take the fixed-term contractor in order to reduce management risk, but the law tells us to take "people who come out from shelter!*" explains Rose, the chief of the renting-service. She even comes to describe the instructions as discriminatory:

> "Because I still remain convinced, but that just my opinion, that it's not... Well, I'm convinced and I weight my words, I speak freely, I still find that it's really discriminatory because you can't categorize profiles like that! This is what I told you "you, you come, you're young, and you just leave your family. I don't know you're on public benefits, you've just finished your studies. I'll put you in "36N" [*Adress number*] with alcoholics! No…" (*Rose, chief of the renting-service, Smalltown, December 9th, 2013, Excerpt from my field book*).

Despite the awareness of unequal treatment and discrimination, social housing professionals apply the rules edicted by their hierarchy: they don't "rebel" in Rose's word. "*You live there, you are classified; you have such a name, you are classified. That's a bit annoying but... We rely on the rule; we don't have that much choice"* said Emma. Similarly, Samia "*understands the rule*", she does not agree with it, she is not totally opposed but she must comply with this rule: "*The unfortunate part is that we generalize for everyone, but we have no choice*". Therefore, even if low-rent agents carry out their activities with discretion, they do not come to destabilize the institutional order since their room for manoeuver and their avoidance strategies are planned and organized by the institution. Managers support systematic face-to-face interviews in order to value the individual treatment of customers. In Mediumcity, agents participate in the selection commission and give their opinions on clients. In Smalltown, public instruments are actually defined as "guidelines": "*It is the responsibility of actors to deviate from the rule when they need to after studying situations and meeting people". "I make exceptions to the rule when it is accepted. If they told me "yes, you can do it", well I'm doing*

it" explains Barthelemy (HLM agent, Smalltown, December 11th, 2013). A good example is the case of people who stand from public benefits, and who are housed in attractive sectors:

> "They don't strictly apply rules. If you want, for the last allocation commission, or the next, we'll attend together, and you'll see that between instruction given and what they did, there's a gap - I'm going to have RSA in these sectors, and I don't step up to the plate because I tell you, they must have some autonomy, the rest is just a directive, an orientation. True, if there is someone who stands on benefits and isn't seen as problematic in the discovery interview they could have, I wouldn't be against… I'm going to oppose when I see "Well, it's ok, this is the tenth RSA you put in this area, and we aren't in the desired target" but if it's only one, I'm not…" (*Alexandre, Director-General in charge of renting, Smalltown, November the 29th, 2013*).

Rules can be bypassed, but it remains marginal. Managers keep them in derogation state through a set of tools, especially the training and the influence of middle-ranking bureaucrats. Actually, on-the-job training can explain the significant place of pragmatic attitudes among street-level bureaucrats. It contributes to promoting transmission and routinization of practices. For instance, the limitation of Turkish applications in Mediumcity illustrates how, despite its abandonment by the local authorities, the fight against communitarianism continues to be applied as an inherited and valued practice by professionals. In addition, the chief of the renting-service holds a key position in the transmission chain of practical knowledge and skills in Smalltown. By signing out forms, she controls the activities of new recruits. Several months after entering the service, HLM agents have yet to obtain her approval to make an offer of accommodation. Comments on applications - "*not the profile*" or "*other building*" - signify that candidates must be reassigned in another housing unit because they will not be accepted by the allocation commission. Hence, the service manager constitutes an important filter in the selection process, which contributes to a standardization of practices and reinforces the institutional order:

> "*But, if I understood, at the beginning, you put Black RSA in the Jules Guesde district...?* Yes, and then Rose told me "no Blacks", "another building" she said, "another entry". I went to see her and she told me "other building". [...] But, now, I'm better able to target the right person on the right place, but that, it comes with experience" (*Emma, HLM agent, Smalltown, December the 10th, 2013*).

Policy instruments also meet the need for new agents training. Thus, the Director-general in charge of renting describe them as "integration tools": they are supposed to encourage the internalization of local rules.

> "This tool then, it was also, beyond the messages we wanted to convey to sales agents who are already familiar with the job, it was an integration tool for us, because before a new agent is actually operational and make the right match between clients and buildings, there's a lot of time. Since September, we have a tool which gives them a clear orientation.

> If you have such a profile, you suggest that" (*Alexandre, Director-General in charge of renting, Smalltown, November the 29th, 2013*).

The fact that rules and policy instruments are based on empirical knowledge can also explain why they are rarely bypassed.

8.4 Conclusion

Social housing allocation is a very slightly legally regulated process, which is implemented by public and private actors with various capacities to act. In spite of the recent reforms in the area of social housing, legal objectives remain vague and unclear. They draw a minimal framework for public action which is taken up and refined on the ground. Guided by the "right to housing" and the principle of social mix, this frame actually defines what is possible or not, and what is legal or not. Despite the significant number of rules and regulations governing their activity, the HLM agencies exercise significant discretionary powers when deciding who qualifies as future tenant. Supported by instruments, local rules are created in order to organize spatial distribution of social groups based on several criteria (social status, race, origin, age, family composition, address). This results in a hierarchy of both customers and buildings, which determines the type of accommodations bureaucrats can offer.

Then, my findings suggest that complex interactions constantly refine institutional categories: they are actualized in micro-level daily practices and imbued with new meanings. However, the distinction between institutional and practical categories has to be qualified since local rules and policy instruments are partly based on field experience. Comparative research is also crucial to highlight regularities in policy-making in various contexts. Even though institutional rules are produced by different types of actors who frame housing allocation differently, we show that populations considered as threatening by local authorities and social landlords are invariably the poor and the immigrants. They are the ones subjected to specific treatments. We brought out two different strategies - concentration and dispersion - depending on the local context. Even if they put forward different arguments, social landlords and local authorities share a common objective to fight against the concentration of ethnic minorities.

Finally, two main findings emerge. First, practices are shaped by organizational rules at the meso-level, and reinforced in their effects by training, routines and collective categorizations at the micro-level. Then, decentralization and individualization of public policies does not

necessarily mean case-by-case treatment and local differentiation. The study reveals regular occurrences in the selection process.

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