

## How and why is observation useful to territorial action?

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### Abstract :

The speech will in a first time set out the essential elements of the program “Pauvreté 3” (“Poverty 3”) what began 1989. These elements constituted the basis of the intervention’ strategy towards destitute publics in the Doubs French department. The approach was definitely different from the precedent used for setting up insertion’s actions, what consisted in bringing together different persons or groups conceiving actions on the basis of their own competences. The project asserted the necessity to take into account demand and needs of population in order to carry out a pragmatic and adapted to demand intervention. In order to be sure that this new approach would be carried out with rigor and objectivity, the project took the University of Franche-Comté as a partner. In a second time, we will describe the method used, structured with data collection, confrontation between requirements and local answers and the constitution of concerted action on the basis of listed requirements. Finally, thank to experience led, we will be able to bring indication on the interest of this method, for users, people involved in the insertion, institutions and elected representatives.

### I. Principles of the “Pauvreté 3” program (1989-1994)

In 1989, European Community launched an Anti-poverty program called “Pauvreté 3”, because it was the third since the 1950’s.

Each country chose between 2 and 4 projects (at this time the EU had only 15 members), these projects were supposed to be laboratories of the European anti-poverty strategies beginning. They consisted in developing innovative actions on areas of different size.

In France, three model-areas were chosen in order to work out a strategic approach meeting better the requirements of a destitute population. These areas were the Mantes-la-Jolie district, a commune in the North of France and the Doubs department.

Beyond the notion of territory, this program had three key principles:

- the multi dimension aspect of the approach
- the partnership
- the participation of the users

Moreover, a transnational approach was necessary, it allowed experience sharing.

In order to make sure of the pertinence of the actions, we had to organize evaluation.

### II. The program’s strategy in the Doubs French department

The project was written by a group of partners around the departmental authorities, represented by the DDASS (State service) and the *Conseil Général* (Department Council).

These two partners were essential to the project because they “shared” in some way the ability and the legitimacy to work on the anti-poverty fight.

It’s important to keep in mind that the *Revenu minimum d’insertion* (R.M.I. – the basic income paid to the jobless) had been voted in 1981, deposited to beneficiary on State credits. The Department Council had to devote 20% of the benefits deposited by the State for financing social and professional

insertion actions.

Our approach was clearly based on a pragmatic action, combining complementarity between thematic and territorial actions.

The context of our engagement was as follows:

We noticed that a lot of actions arising from direct local initiative could not be financed, even though they were innovative and supported by motivated teams, because they were not in the frame of social action's financing.

We financed thematic and territorial actions. Targets of local actions (in rural or urban areas) were destitute groups helped by social services without economic integration perspective or local development. Thematic actions wanted to introduce new dimensions in supporting population and developing new answers by the partners (health, housing...).

After the beginning of the project, we knew the approach would make a change necessary and that it would be destabilizing for measures' leaders or elected representatives.

Actually, financiers used to examine projects coming from organisms, associations, groups that had created a structure and had past experience on a theme, such as housing, insertion through economic activity, health, and that proposed to extend or to modelize this action in other areas.

As poverty phenomena was infiltrated in many sectors and areas of the Doubs French department, the action would inevitably find favourable echo.

And, we have to tell it, we met big resistance in the first years of the "Pauvreté 3" program.

As we were only a handful of men and women to manage the program, and as we were not really hundred per cent sure to be right, we became partners with the University of Franche-Comté via the laboratory "Mathematics, computer science and statistics", led by Jean-Jacques Girardot, to be helped by the research-action approach in our problematic definition, our tools formulation, the pertinency of these tools, the formulation of a scientific, and so impartial and transparent) evaluation.

The idea was quite simple: people living in the North and in the South of the department, in rural or rough areas, could not have the same needs, because they had not the same job, housing, culture or health' infrastructure conditions.

That's why it was not possible to carry out and to modelize an action without taking into account the living context.

The project strategy, supported by the university competence, our technical knowledge and a European experts' binomen evaluated during the five years of the program towards conception and development of what we called concerted measures.

Before presenting the method we implemented, I would like to give some advantages this approach allowed in the conception of the insertion measures carried out by the State and the Department Council:

- a better definition of the target groups among destitute groups
- a more objective approach of the needs using simple surveys, and so a more suitable answer to needs of the groups
- a multi-dimension approach assured by concerting investment of all partners involved
- an important saving of time by gathering at the beginning different partners involved in divergent institutional logics. By this way, each partner is involved in the same action project that assigns precise opening to the thought.

Needs' identification, based on clearly limited and often well-known situations, creates an emulation between partners. Establishing connections is easier as when it is asked to isolated actions to work together and to build the partnership on the basis of general, and often more abstract, objectives. A lot of time is needed for establishing connections between teams that don't know each other, or that are often in competition.

- a reduction of actions' cost: the multi-dimension approach imposes many interventions, successive or concomitant. Mobilizing a competence on many projects makes easier acceptance of intervention costs and gridding of interventions on a territory.

- A more efficient evaluation of the actions, that don't chose their targets any more, but that have to define their functions and their intervention methods according to groups' needs.

It is important to precise that these concerted intervention method gives a concrete content to social and/or socio-professional action coordination on an area and more globally guarantees to public authorities a general view of the needs in order to work out social politics.

### III. The intervention method

We conceptualised with the University of Franche-Comté the steps of a multi-dimension action strategy that allowed us systematically to ensure that the method went in this direction and contributed, step by step, to amass information on destitute population's needs and the results of the evaluation of actions carried out for them.

Four steps were defined:

Step 1:

- Knowing the context to work out measures
- Listing the needs
- Spotting existing answers and their relevance according to the needs

Step 2:

- Defining the functions of each partner in the integration process

Step 3:

- Reinforcing the measures consistency

Step 4:

- Amassing data and experience
- Modelizing experience in view of transferring it

In order to make coherent the development of the five steps, two functions are essential: animation and evaluation.

***1. First step: Knowing the context to work out measures***

To define concerted measures on the basis of destitute groups' needs, it is necessary to identify the needs of target groups and to evaluate the existing answers' capacity to solve pertinently their problems.

As poverty or precariousness don't affect uniformly all groups, needs of these groups are very different.

Difficulties of a nomadic group in sedentation can not be tackled like a wandering young group in a rough area, or a group of single mothers.

The first group have illiteracy, schooling, children, administrative cover, access to care, housing... problems.

The second group, young people, can be looking for education marks, they are lacking qualification, safety, resources, self confidence...

The third group of single mothers can need help in children education, they can have mobility, baby-sitting or money problems.

It is really essential to know characteristics of each group on a coherent geographic area (district, urban commune or rural zone).

It's better if these investigation are organized by social workers with direct experience.

We had noticed these workers had relevant information on target groups. This information can only be known by a direct and deep contact with the group, they are not spontaneously mobilized and were sometimes incomplete, or even distorted.

A simple survey often allows to distinguish and to describe objectively the groups' profiles, since social workers bring valuable elements for constituting one or many target groups.

Identification of the needs is the basis of the thought in view of working out coherent measures of economic and social integration.

When needs are identified, partners are able to diffuse the service offer on the intervention area.

At that moment, measures consist in stating the intervention fields of each partner working with households and telling what they are responsible for.

Are current answers pertinent according to needs? Do answers cover all identified problems? Which ones are under represented?

This concerted work of partners is exceptionally rich, it is besides an efficiency guarantee because it allows to carry out a common project on a common thought and a common aim.

Then we are far from juxtaposing isolated actions that show since centuries its limits when the administrative criterion defines the range of responsibilities and abilities of an organization.

That's why the second step, that consists in defining the functions of each partner in the integration process is as important as relevant as the first step.

## ***2. Second step: Defining the functions of each partner in the integration process***

Because if partnership is a necessary condition for the multi-dimension character, it is not enough.

To be effective, the partners' intervention must be structured on an integration process, which final aim is durable employment.

This process must present graded, but not necessarily linear steps, from the most distant of employment towards employment (social autonomy, professional mobilization, professional project, qualification, preparation to employment) and each partner has to be able to bring its consultancy and its capacity at the right time, either during the process or jointly with other interventions.

One of the most complex aspect to carry out in this step is the formulation of a common project, in which each partner can understand and measure its contribution, always partial but in relation and in synergy with other partners.

For each partner it is too admitting that it is not more powerful than the others and that only common force allows a true success for groups we coach.

Organizing this process requires, at this stage, a real territorial animation allowing to work out with partners, social workers, financial institutions a jointed, complementary process and to network competences in order to avoid forgetting a need or investing too much other needs because they are easier to manage or more enriching.

## ***3. Third step: Reinforcing de measures consistency***

Auto-evaluation is a complementary function of animation because of its interaction with programming. It opens in each team an action, a thought based on comparison between predictions and accomplishments that allows to affirm consistency of the action strategy, to improve programming and to change team practices.

The University of Franche-Comté accompanied the pragmatic approach of the Doubs model-action by working out, step by step, tools necessary for all the steps.

By this way, some tools were set at the disposal of the teams:

- tools for searching contextual information
- tools for knowledge of target groups (profile, needs, actions what could meet these needs)
- auto-evaluation tools allowing to follow action's evolution, from the project's description to its objectives, its organization methods, its measuring tools of success' indicators...

All these tools allows to tackle the fourth step: amassing data and experience.

## ***4. Fourth step: Amassing data and experience***

This step is fundamental and constitutes the underpinning of territorial intelligence.

Grouping together and capitalizing data and experience allow to describe progressively an important number of situations.

The results of evaluation actions contribute to the evaluation of more general measures and are set at the disposal of leaders and financiers as a help to decision for programming of insertion policies.

One of the measures' very positive aspect was that all actions financed in the frame of the European program have been maintained after "Pauvreté 3", what means that local authorities have taken over from European credits, the evaluation that was made showed indeed that these actions were particularly adapted to population needs.

## **IV. Observation as a driving force behind action**

The experience of the « Poverty 3 » programme ended in 1994. It is already been 14 years!

However, this pragmatic approach we developed in the departement of Doubs and which, from my point of view, resolutely allowed guiding our attention to the real needs of population groups we were in charge of, is still a current position of work and involvement.

Without giving all my activities of these last years, I would like to share with you the adaptation of this method I developed within the association I lead and which calls "stopping-place for employment".

In a few words, the "stopping-place for employment" mainly consists in the reception of the young public (thus the association is labelled "local mission", and the adult public of the urban Community of Strasbourg in order to support their enduring professional integration.

On average, we receive 13,000 people.

The team of the association is composed of one hundred employees whose majority is located in 16 sites to provide a local reception.

Our main funders are the State, the urban Community of Strasbourg, the Region of Alsace and the departement of Bas-Rhin.

For almost 15 years, the “Stopping-place for employment” disposes of grants from the European social Fund, as an intermediate organization. Many protocols “Local Plan for Integration and Employment (LPIE)” have already been signed amongst which the two previous ones in 1993-200, then 2000-2006.

2006 is the year during which I am employed as manageress of the association. It is above all the last year of the protocol 2000-2006 – and therefore, the preparation of the present protocol, which is extended from 2007 to 2013.

The two last protocols aimed at revitalizing the integration by economic activity, and consolidating this plan on the labour pool of Strasbourg.

I had suggested that two protocols for the integration by economic activity seemed enough, and it was time national and local partners take over their funding; indeed, the second act of the decentralization had confirmed the Departement as integration leader, and this plan seemed to be part of its abilities.

The Council for the department itself had this same point of view, because it applied for being supported by the European social Fund as such.

In brief, the opportunity was interesting to think about an approach which takes into account the public we receive, and which, in an incredible way, did not manage within the framework of the two last protocols, to be enough integrated in the structures we funded with regards to the ESF.

Inside, we were in a situation in which 13,000 people were received by voluntary advisers, often dynamic and reactive, but who did not have other tools than the dialogue and their strength of conviction to bring out a young people or adult’s professional project or ambition, make them get involved in a qualification, prepare their job interview, support them in employment.

After a few months of internal and external argues, we exposed to the regional prefecture a project which placed the whole ESF funds for the socioprofessional path of the young people and adults of the association.

It consisted in implementing tools that advisers could mobilize at anytime in order to:

- remove the social barriers to employment (sorting out problems of daily life)
- identify the professional project (choice of line of business and profession), and the way to apprehend the chosen course of studies: re-educating, work-based learning, training course during the employment...) with the help of workshops to discover business
- validate this professional project
- be prepared to the employment with the insurance that the basic knowledge and the soft skills are gained (punctuality, politeness, instructions understanding, time organization, understanding the enterprise culture...)
- maintain employment

Despite the energy spent during the implementation of this tool set, though defined as useful and necessary for the advisers themselves to accompany efficiently to the professional integration, we had to notice, and the team of Strasbourg who is here today and that I greet, can attest it: the frequenting of workshops was completely unsatisfying.

Whilst following the idea of work tools adapted to users’ needs of the association, we had a parallel approach for the structuring of local partners.

At this moment, the concept and the method of territorial intelligence could be mobilized again.

We took up the data of the received people, in order to define, with a consultant, their profiles, their path stages, their particularities.

Especially this time, we explored the specificities of each area we were established.

The discussions with the teams allowed putting the finishing touches to the analysis, removing the wrong representations we inevitably had about such and such public, also defining priority or specific groups which could draw our attention.

One of these groups was composed of young people coming from areas known as rough, not very skilled young people, sometimes marginalized, without employment, disoriented; in brief a public known as “rough”.

In an area of Strasbourg, the teams mentioned these problems; many partners knew young people; young people moved between institutions, mocking the one and considering that the other

did not make anything for them or that it was useless and ineffective...

Finally, four of these partners decided to think together to this young public, the “roughest of the rough young people in the area”; we formed, with the sociocultural centre, a specialized prevention team, the city of Strasbourg and the association, a technical group which built an action for 12 of these young people.

The idea was about devoting 6 months “entirely to them”, by starting with violence, idleness, negative views and by leading the group to respect, punctuality, dialogue, itch to discover, the discovery of his/her resources and distinctions, and inevitably the wish of autonomy and then the wish of work.

These 6 months were very hard but rewarding.

## Conclusion

Without being focused on the content of the action, what did we test out again?

Firstly, the necessity for the partners to present their missions, their ways to work, to understand their objectives, to admit their limits and the constraints of the others, then the interest to observe together the redundancies of their interventions, and also the gaps in the individual or collective supports of people.

This bush clearing allowed a concerted action of 6 months, at the end of which 10 out of 12 young people follow a qualifying training course or have an employment.

We considered these results as exceptional, without humility.

And we have today about 10 coming projects because partners of the other areas, and funders have been convinced by the interest of this approach.

It is of course only an example. In a more general way, we extended this approach to other towns close to Strasbourg, or more modestly to small groups whose issues are similar.

Inside, this pragmatic approach offers an efficiency of the intervention of which target publics we are in charge of directly and rapidly receive.

It is an impressive dynamics for the local partners, who can like this to know each other, recognize themselves and hold a common and strong discourse to the populations.

Is is also a guarantee for success to institutions and elected representatives, which see on their communities of intervention, a coherent partner network allowing improving the situation of inhabitants and the social cohesion.