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## Overview of Refugees' access to housing in France: the metropolises of Lyon and Rennes

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Housing for immigrants and community integration in Europe and beyond: strategies, policies, dwellings and governance

## **Overview of Refugees' access to housing in France: the metropolises of Lyon and Rennes**

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# Document History

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MERGING is an H2020 project gathering 10 partners and aiming to foster migrants' inclusion through co-constructive housing. The consortium is formed of 10 partners originated from 6 countries: the University Jean Moulin Lyon (France - coordinator), the University Rennes 1- EHESP (France), Quatorze (association of architects, France), Lyon Ingénierie Projet (academic project management company, France), the University of Valencia (Spain), the University of Bologna (Italy), the Universities of Gothenburg and Malmö (Sweden), COTA (Consultant in public policies, Belgium), and SocialBusinessEarth (NGO, Switzerland).

The MERGING project pursues two main objectives: 1) to offer new tools for enhancing the integration of migrants across Europe, 2) to improve practices and policies at local, national and EU level for the integration of immigrants in European urban and local settings. To do so, the MERGING partners will test, implement and evaluate pilot co-constructive housing projects. Interactions with various stakeholders are expected during the whole project. Collaboration with NGOs and public authorities will be developed and strengthened in order to interview of refugees and volunteers. Experts' committees will be set up to support and advise partners during the implementation and progress of the three pilots projects. Finally, participative works plans will also be set up with beneficiaries, volunteers and civil society members.



# Summary

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## Glossary

CADA	Centre d'Accueil de Demandeurs d'Asile (Reception Center for Asylum Seekers)
CALM	Comme A La Maison (Like at Home)
CCH	Code de Construction et du Logement (Construction and Housing Code)
CPH	Centre Provisoire d'Hébergement (Temporary Accomodation Centers)
CTAIR	Contrats territoriaux d'accueil et d'intégration des réfugiés (Territorial Contracts for the Reception and Integration of Refugees)
DDETS	Directions Départementales de l'Emploi, du Travail et des Solidarités (Departmental Directorates for Employment, Labour and Solidarity)
DGEF	Direction Générale des Etrangers en France (General Directorate for Foreigners in France)
DIAIR	Délégation interministérielle à l'accueil et à l'intégration des réfugiés (Interministerial Delegation for the Reception and Integration of Refugees)
DIHAL	Délégation Interministérielle pour l'Hébergement et l'Accès au Logement (Interministerial Delegation for Housing and Access to Housing)
EMILE	Engagés pour la Mobilité et l'Insertion par le Logement et l'Emploi (Engaged for the Resettlement and the Inclusion through Housing and Employment).
FNAVDL	Fond National de Soutien pour et dans le logement (National Fund for Support to and in Housing)
HUDA	Hébergement d'Urgence pour Demandeurs d'Asile (Emergency Accommodation for Asylum Seekers)
OFII	Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration (French Office for Immigration and Integration)
OFPRA	Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides (French Protection Office for Refugees and Apatrides)
SIAO	Service Intégré d'Accueil et d'Orientation (Integrated Reception and Orientation Service)
UTUD	Un Toit c'est Un Droit (A roof is a Right)



## Executive summary

This work is the country research report prepared within Work Package 2, focused on housing solutions for refugees and beneficiaries of international protection status in France, delivered under the H2020 project *MERGING – Integration for Migrants*. The main objectives of this report are to:

- Map the actions, scope, actors and resources involved in the access to housing for refugees
- Portrait refugees' needs and households
- Provide recommendations to associative, private and public stakeholders

Our report describes the actions engaged to favor refugees' access to housing in two French metropolises: Lyon and Rennes. Our study highlighted the existence of three different types of actions: actions impulsed by the gouvernement (top-down), actions developed by local actors and implemented at the national level (down-up) and actions developed by local actors and implemented at the local level (horizontal). We point the limits of the current system, segregating people based on their perceived desirability and autonomy as well as on their age and gender.

Our report describes the multilevel governance existing regarding refugees' access to housing in Lyon and Rennes. Based on Czischke (2018) multilevel governance model, we map stakeholders based on three dimensions (civil society, public authorities and markets) at both the local, regional and national levels. Six types of actors are identified: professional actors mandated by the government, professional actors operating without official mandate, confessional associations, civil initiatives, professional activists, and other types of actors.

Interestingly, our report points the heterogeneity of actions and situations existing on the French soil regarding refugees' access and participation to housing. While national actors tend to standardize procedures by implementing a single policy to the overall population of refugees, local actors try to adapt to individual needs and situations. The decentralization engaged by the French government a couple of years ago has two major consequences. First, it tends to raise competition among associations to get public subventions and – thus – the influence and decision power of those that received official mandate. Second, it increases the fragmentation of the French reception scheme and the heterogeneity of actors and procedures among territories.

Our reports highlights differences in the way refugees are taking (or not) part in the allocation process locally, and regarding the consideration of their needs.



# 1. Mapping of actors, procedures, resources and actions involved in the access to housing for refugees

The objective of this section is to present the actions engaged by the main actors involved in the access to housing for refugees in France as well as the existing procedures and resources. Due to the peculiarities of the French system, we will conduct a multi-level analysis, i.e. from the national to local levels, including public and private actors, institutionalized and non-institutionalized initiatives. After presenting the actions identified in France - notably in the cities of Lyon and Rennes (1.1), we will present the scope (1.2), the main stakeholders (1.3), the management and collaborations engaged (1.4), some examples of successes and failures (1.5) and, finally, elements related to participation (1.6).

## 1.1 Actions

In line with the multi-level and fragmentation of the French soil, actions engaged in the country are disparate, both from their nature and scale. Some of them will be impelled by the government and managed by large organisations covering part of the territory, others will be created and implemented by local associations. Some will be covering a wide array of needs (housing, access to the labor market, etc.) while others will focus on a particular task.

### *Actions engaged at the national level*

At the national level, several actions have been implemented over the last years in order to facilitate refugees' access to housing. Besides the National Reception Scheme, we can mention the creation of the Solibail, a program created by the Ministry of Ecological Transition to mobilize private housing for vulnerable people. In this program, the State acting as a guarantor for house owners willing to rent to refugees (box 1).

#### Box 1. Description of the Solibail Program

Solibail is a program guaranteed by the State and designed for housing owners willing to house a low-income family without running risks. It allows owners to rent their properties to an approved association to house a low-income family, through a rental contract secured by the State. The association pays the rental and guarantees the good maintenance of the housing. Concretely, Solibail provides owners with several advantages:





- The security of paying their rents and charges, with no risk of unpaid rent, no vacancies, and no day-to-day management worries.
- A rent in line with market prices, as the financial conditions proposed for the rental of each property are defined according to the average rent of the geographical sector.
- The maintenance of properties, as the management association ensures that apartments are restored free of charge before being returned to their owners. It also carries out all the maintenance work remaining to tenants during the term of the lease.
- The assurance of getting properties back, as owners can decide at the end of each lease to get their property back. In case an occupant refuses to vacate the property upon return, the managing association will initiate legal proceedings and the related costs will be covered by the scheme. Owners receive daily occupancy allowances at the end of the notice period.
- The optimization of occupation and income: owners will receive a rent until the end of the lease, whether the apartment is occupied or not
- A personalized professional management: the accredited association in charge of each property ensures a follow-up and a personalized management of owners' accommodations, free of charges. It accompanies the housed households on a daily basis and ensures that each home is occupied in a peaceful manner.
- A possible tax deductions and assistance as, depending on the area, owners can benefit from tax deductions of up to 85% of their rental income.

Source: Ministry of the Ecological Transition (2021)

In addition to the Solibail, several programs have been initiated by the central state and monitored by the decentralized state (Prefecture, OFII, DDETS), which mainly target asylum seekers and refugees. These programs are implemented by associations mandated by the government, such as Coallia and Saint Benoît Labre for Rennes Métropole, Forum Réfugiés Cosi for Lyon Metropole, Coallia and Adoma for the Paris area. We can cite the example of Accel'air, a program implemented by Forum Réfugiés Cosi at a regional level. This program is supported by the central state as an experiment, and combines access to housing, training and access to the labor market. It should be replicated at the national level in the coming months. The objective of central state is to implement a single widow policy for refugees to reduce e number of intermediaries and better control their integration.

#### *Actions engaged at the regional/departemental level*

Besides actions engaged at the national level, numerous initiatives are carried out by the metropolises and the municipalities in terms of social housing in general (Sala-Pala, 2002). These actions are the result of both a tradition of proactive intervention by the territory's elected representatives and the political will of mayors (e.g. Nathalie Appéré in Rennes, Grégory Doucet in Lyon, Anne Hidalgo in Paris). The former prefect of the Rhone department, Alain Régnier (current Director of the Diair), decided



to consider refugees as a highly vulnerable population and to ensure them special treatment in the department (cf. part 1.3 stakeholders).

These actions concern refugees who apply for social housing (metropolitan level) as well as families with children and without status (municipal level), since the Mayor of Rennes has decided since her first election that no child would sleep rough in her territory. To implement these actions, the Metropolis relies on the above-mentioned operators and social landlords to house refugees. For families with children and without status, the City Council directly manages a shelter system with accommodation located in various places in the department. It also relies on associations that are poorly financed by the public authorities and which intervene in the field of accommodation for exiles (UTUD, for example). In the same vein, a couple of interesting initiatives have been engaged in 2021 by both the metropolises of Lyon and Rennes. These two metropolises decided to convention some squats hosting migrants and refugees. The agreements signed with the squats of Arloing (Lyon) and the Jardin des Poteries (Rennes) allow metropolises to experiment pilot initiatives: allowing vulnerable people to access to a temporary housing solution while making sure that facilities will be restituted at a certain point without damages.

#### *Actions engaged by professional and non-professional associations*

Moreover, many actions are carried out by associations that are more or less specialized in the field of accommodation for exiles and that support these people regardless of their administrative status. These associations are mainly organized by volunteers, although some have one or two employees or people on civic service. They aim at meeting migrants' needs for listening, psychological and administrative support, legal and linguistic assistance, among others. This point will be further developed in part 1.3 Stakeholders.

Several actions have been implemented by large and professional associations, covering several regions. We can notably cite the example of the THRASOS project, created by Habitat & Humanisme, offering refugees willing to join the program an accommodation and a training to get a job in sectors suffering from labor shortages. The objective of THRASOS is to accompany beneficiaries of international protection in a process of geographic mobility towards training and sustainable employment, in partnership with recognized companies and training organizations. The program targets several sectors of activity in tension, notably construction, food processing and logistics, agriculture and green spaces, catering, cleaning. Several jobs have already offered: roofer, order picker, greenhouse agent, kitchen/bakery clerks, etc.

Besides Habitat & Humanisme, other professional associations, such as Aurore, Caracol, or Singa, have been implementing actions on the French soil to facilitate the



integration of refugees. They either temporarily occupy vacant buildings or offer a global accompaniment to foster integration (Aurore), give refugees the possibility to be hosted by French families for a couple of months up to a year (Singa), or even created refugee-national co-housings (Caracol). The same kind of initiatives have been implemented across the country, both in rural areas (such as Tero Loko) or in cities (e.g. Espero France, etc.).



## Box 2. Examples of initiatives supported by associations

In 2014, Aurore created the "Un toit, un emploi" (One roof, one job) scheme - which integrated the national program EMILE in 2019 (*Engagés pour la Mobilité et l'Insertion par le Logement et l'Emploi* - Engaged for the Resettlement and the Inclusion through Housing and Employment). In 2017, the association also developed two new programs in the country side, such as in the Cantal department: AGIR and AGIR PRO. These two new schemes are dedicated to integration and socio-professional insertion: AGIR (Global Accompaniment for Reinforced Integration) and AGIR PRO (Global Accompaniment for Reinforced Professional Insertion). They offer support in addition to the common law for newcomers to the Cantal department (AGIR 15), and socio-professional support for new Active Solidarity Income (ASI) recipients.

In 2015, Singa created CALM (Comme A La Maison), a program connecting refugees looking for temporary accommodation with citizens who have a room to host them., citizens can host refugees for 3 to 12 months and offer them the framework to fully engage in integration projects and search for a housing solution.

Singa put in relation refugees and hosts sharing common interest in order to make the cohabitation as enriching as possible. The matching is based on several criteria: proposed/requested location of the host and accessibility by public transport, professional activity and interests, etc. Singa offers the hosts a special training before the beginning of the cohabitation in order to sensitise families to cultural differences, etc. Since 2017, 570 refugees have been hosted one of the 2,500 hosting families across France.

Created in 2018, Caracol takes over the management of vacant spaces to promote and intercultural shared housing. infill housing. These are roommates where refugees and French where refugees and French people of different ages, origins of different ages, origins, and backgrounds. The Caracol's shared flats offer a stable living environment, over a long period of time, known in advance, within a collective organized around the principles of equality between each resident and autonomy in the daily management of the place. The residents are chosen for their desire to pursue an experience of experience of cohabitation, their adhesion to the values of the project and their previous difficulties in obtaining housing. Since 2018, Caracol managed to mobilize 13,815 m<sup>2</sup> and, thus, to open 70 rooms in 8 buildings spread across the country.

Sources: Aurore (2021), Singa (2021), Caracol (2021)



Besides national associations, several local ones are also in accommodation issues. These associations can be confessional or not, young or old. They are not mandated by the government (but collaborate with local authorities) and tend to rely highly on volunteers.

In the city of Rennes, we can mention UTUD, which offers accommodation to people in houses made available either by local authorities or by property developers, or Bienvenue, which organises solidarity accommodation. Other associations are more generalist but also work in the field of accommodation (some are quite strongly institutionalised: Emmaus, MRAP; others are weakly institutionalised: DIDA, Utopia 56, Carpes...). A certain number of people also live in squats (with the support of associations or collectives that are not institutionalised at all) or in tents in several public parks. In the metropolis of Lyon, we can mention several civil initiatives, such as YZEA, Pollionnay Accueil Solidarité or SMC Migrants, among others. Interestingly, a rising number of citizen initiatives (Le Dure à Cuire, InterSquat...) are emerging in large cities to protest against vacant building and offer vulnerable people (such as refugees) temporary shelters by creating and/or managing squats. In 2021, the Metropolis of Lyon decided to officially appoint two squats in the city, not only to frame these practices, to ensure the dignity and the respect of the buildings or to reinsure stakeholders, but also as an experiment to test whether appointed squats could offer new temporary housing solutions and, at the same time, fight against vacant buildings.

### *Market actors*

Finally, market actors also intervene in this field, by providing resources and/or competencies to offer refugees temporary housing solutions. In the city of Rennes, for example, the property developers who provide the houses managed by UTUD obviously play an important role. Some actors intervene for some groups of refugees. This is the case of the “Foyers de jeunes travailleurs” which accept some of them alongside with other categories of young people. Formally, these Foyers are associations but they have to integrate the housing market rules in their functioning. Other actors have a more indirect action: this is the case of the Union des entreprises 35 which recruits refugees and therefore the programs lead people to make more or less constrained housing choices (depending on the location of the company or the working hours).

In the city of Lyon, several professional actors developed networks and initiatives to offer temporary housing solutions for refugees. We can mention the example of the Ouvre Porte and the Entreprise des possible. In 2017, and in collaboration with three organizations (the AlterHotel, the Flaneur and the Hotel de Normandie), the association l’Ouvre Porte diverted the Italian concept of “suspended coffees” in order



to create the concept of “suspended nights” in Lyon in order to offer vulnerable people like refugees emergency shelters. In the same vein, Alain Mérieux (CEO of Biomerieux) created the *Entreprise des Possibles*, a collective of companies developing shelters and promoting the reintegration into society of people who no longer have a decent home, or who, because of their great vulnerability are at risk of ending up on the street. With their employees, and in conjunction with the associative world, these companies pool and redistribute human, financial and material resources to social action and housing actors working in the fight against extreme poverty to give the most disadvantaged people a roof over their heads and social support to enable them to rebuild their lives in the long term.

## 1.2 Scope

The state and its operators are taking in charge refugees, both in the investigation of their asylum application and in their integration process once refugee status has been obtained. Refugees are also supported by the Metropolis, which is responsible for the allocation of social housing. Depending on the person and their "degree of autonomy" or their "ability to live in the housing" (i.e. their ability to understand administrative procedures, to speak French or to integrate into autonomous housing), they will receive more or less social support.

- The least "autonomous" will be accommodated either in a temporary accommodation centre (managed by OFII).
- Those who are partially "autonomous" will depend on the Local Housing Commission managed by Rennes Metropolis. There are three possible options: accommodation in a migrant workers' hostel; follow-up called "support in housing" provided by Coallia; or rental intermediation provided by the Social and Solidarity Property Agency.
- People who are completely "autonomous" are directed toward the common law systems, either in the private housing stock or in the public housing stock (via the Metropolis's local allocation commission).

However, these cases are partly theoretical. Actually, the waiting period between applying for asylum and obtaining refugee status can be very long (up to ten years in some cases). Besides, many people do not obtain any status and become illegal while remaining in the territory. Indeed, the waiting time between the request for accommodation or housing allocation is long (between one and one and a half years) and the amount of accommodation and housing units is largely insufficient to cover the demand, whether at the time of the asylum requests or at the time of obtaining refugee status (in 2019, there were 1400 asylum requests for 288 places in the National



asylum scheme). Also, for a couple to access social housing, both spouses must have been granted refugee status; couples with conflicting statuses will not be allocated housing. It should also be emphasized that people do not always accept the housing offered to them (even if this is still a minority case) because of the geographical distributions that are imposed on them (Gardesse, 2020). Indeed, many of them seem reluctant to leave the central city where they are close to their compatriots, where public services are nearby, where their children may already have gone to school, etc.

In addition, a certain number of refugees, particularly young men under 25 years of age (not receiving RSA) and in good health, face significant difficulties in accessing social housing due to their lack of income. As a result, they are frequently housed in solidarity accommodation (with French families or compatriots) or in squats or by the 115. The young men we met during the fieldwork largely underlined the difficulties linked to this situation: the lack of resources leads many of them to enter into trafficking or to accept illegal work without any social protection.

### 1.3 Stakeholders

As mentioned in our National Report D2.2, accessing to housing is conditioned by the officialization of migrants' statuses – either by the OFPRA or the National Court of Appeal for Asylum Seekers. This report focuses on refugees and beneficiaries of an international protection.

#### 1.3.1 National stakeholders

Accessing to housing for refugees is jointly piloted by two institutional actors: the DIHAL (*Délégation interministérielle à l'hébergement et à l'accès au logement* – the Interministerial Delegation for Housing and Access to Housing) and the DIAIR (*Délégation interministérielle d'accueil et de l'intégration des réfugiés* – Interministerial Delegation for Reception and Integration of Refugees). They both operate at the national level and monitor the actions engaged at the regional and local levels by prefects and local authorities.

#### *Interministerial Delegation for Housing and Access to Housing (DIHAL)*

The Dihal is a sectorial interministerial delegation created in 2010 that reports to the Prime Minister and is de facto attached to the French Ministry of territorial cohesion (Ministère de la Cohésion des territoires). It has developed several fields of action, all of which work to improve housing access and options for all people who either



struggle to access housing (e.g., sleeping rough) in the first place or are in precarious, unaffordable or substandard housing. It aims at combatting homelessness and accelerating the access to permanent housing, in accordance with the principles of the "housing first" model. The Dihal is both a policy maker and coordinator of housing-related actions at the national level. Its missions have been specified and extended in the Ministerial Ruling of March 25<sup>th</sup> 2021 (article 7)<sup>1</sup>. The Dihal's main missions are both to monitor the renovation of housing but also to resorb slums, prevent rental eviction, facilitate the access to housing to vulnerable groups (notably to beneficiaries of international protections and Roma and traveler communities), supervising actors confronted to housing related issues, and developing social housing, among others.

Since January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, the Dihal is responsible for the budgetary program "Housing, pathways to housing and integration of vulnerable people" (€2.4 billion in 2020) and, since April 1, 2021, for all the competencies in the field of housing and access to housing – notably for refugees. A special division has been created to this regard, the Migrants Department. Unlike its name would indicate, this department is centered around refugees and people beneficiaries from subsidiary protection (PSP). The Dihal frequently cooperates with associations, social housing providers, subcontracted private companies on a national level, as well as with public and private local actors, often on a county-level. It is a member of the Interministerial Commission for the Housing of Immigrant Populations. This Commission is in charge of the renovation of old Migrant Workers' Hostels – engaged by the government in 1990 – and their transformation into social housings.

#### *Interministerial Delegation for Reception and Integration of Refugees*

The Diair is an interministerial delegation created in 2017 in the action plan to guarantee the right to asylum and better control migration flows. It is placed under the authority of the Minister of the Interior. His mission is to participate in the definition and coordination of the policy for the reception and integration of beneficiaries from an international protection (BIP) – i.e. people that have been granted from an official status by the OFPRA or the CNDA. It seeks to ensure a good integration of refugees into French society and intervene in five areas, notably through housing. In other words, it aims at impulsing actions as well as coordinating and mobilizing actors at different levels: in central and local administrations, local authorities, associations belonging to the civil society.

The Diair pilots the National Strategy for the Reception and Integration of Refugees – stemming from the Tâché Report (2018), and currently one of the biggest action plan targeting refugees in France. The Interministerial Committee for Integration (2018) acted the implementation of a new set of measures designed to foster foreigners'

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<sup>1</sup> Available on: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000043294662>





integration in France, some of them being specifically dedicated to refugees. Indeed, the Interministerial Committee for Integration endorsed the fact that from 2018, “refugees will benefit from a reinforced social and administrative support to assist them through the first months after obtaining their status” – notably for accessing to housing. This decision is built upon the ministerial circular published on December 12<sup>th</sup> 2017, which endorsed the decision to mobilize 20,000 housing for refugees by the end of 2018 through three channels:

- Mobilizing all players involved in refugees’ integration
- Reconducting accompanying measures favoring empowerment and safeguarding housing for refugees
- Maintaining and encouraging springboard projects developed by associations, such as citizen and solidarity housing.

This quota is about to be reached, despite great challenges. As explained by Alain Regnier<sup>2</sup> (2020), “Even if we have doubled the effort to capture social housing on the quota since 2017, the objectives of rehousing these groups have not been achieved because they are only on the State's quota. [...] Beyond the pandemic, with 9,000 or 10,000 social housing units mobilized the last two years, we are now at the limit of the possibility of mobilizing the prefectural quota, which must also be used to rehouse other groups under common law (people leaving shelters, Dalo, etc.). We have made a lot of progress, but we are not yet up to the reality of the needs. About 15,000 to 16,000 housing units per year (social or private) are needed to meet the needs of people receiving international protection. We must therefore mobilize more actors, despite the pandemic”.

The Diar collaborates with elected officials to mobilize territories on the issue of access to housing for refugees, through the Solid'R Mayors network and territorial contracts (CTAIR). Among the 250 CTAIR actions that have been launched throughout France in 2019 and 2020, 15 actions (21% of the overall CTAIR budget) are dedicated to housing. In 2021, 18 cities and metropolises are part of the CTAIR program: Brest, Dijon, Lyon, Grenoble, Nantes, Toulouse, Rennes, Bordeaux, Clermont-Ferrand, Nancy, Strasbourg, Marseille, Tours, Besançon, Poitiers, Rouen and Montpellier. Each member receives an annual subvention (up to 300,000 euros) to develop initiatives related to the integration of refugees. The amount depends on the number of Republican Integration Contracts registered in the area. Each city or metropolis can submit to the local prefecture projects dedicated to the integration of refugees in order to obtain some extra funds. It has to be specified that, since June 1<sup>st</sup>, the CTAIR became CTAI and are placed under the authority of the DGEF (Ministry of Interior): these contracts are not only targeting refugees anymore, but rather all vulnerable groups (young adults, travelers, first-arrival migrants, homelessness...).

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<sup>2</sup> Interview of Alain Regnier by Elodier Raitière (AEF info), Sept 25<sup>th</sup> 2020 – available at <https://accueil-integration-refugies.fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/itw-Alain-Regnier-logement-AEF-sept-2020.pdf>



Both the DiAir and Dihal rarely intervene directly with their target group or on the ground. Rather, they seek to coordinate the different actors involved and assure steering functions and strategic aspects. Despite their political importance, such structure means that they are often little known by the actors ensuring implementation on the ground, such as local associations. They are both part of the CILPI (inter-ministerial commission for the housing of immigrant population). The CILPI pilots the plan for the treatment of migrant workers' homes (PTFTM). Its mission is also to strengthen the network of actors (administration, landlords, managers, associations and residents' representatives). It has the task of strengthening the network of players (administration, landlords, managers, associations and residents' representatives) and of leading discussion groups on better living together, integration of residents and their access to rights.

### 1.3.2 Regional and local authorities

The French soil is made of 101 counties (*départements*) and 13 regions (*régions*), ruled by the Prefects, i.e. local government representatives. Each department has its own prefecture and prefect, the most important ones acting as regional prefectures as well. They are attached to the Ministry of the Interior.

#### *Regional and departmental prefectures*

The regional level ensures the link between the ministries, the national strategies, and the departmental administration, for implementation. The regional directorates define the methods of application of national directives in the region. They lead the networks of competences present in the region, at the departmental and regional levels. They distribute the resources allocated by the ministries. This work is carried out under the authority of the regional prefect.

The departmental level is the level of contact with users and the level of implementation of public policies, under the authority of the departmental prefects, who have at their disposal, in particular, the prefecture and the interministerial departmental directorates, the territorial units of the regional directorates and the police and gendarmerie services ([www.rhone.gouv.fr](http://www.rhone.gouv.fr)).

Since the beginning of the deconcentration process of the state, engaged in 1992, prefectures play a more and more important role regarding housing related issues. The National Strategy for the integration of Asylum seekers and refugees specifies that from 2021, *“it will be the responsibility of the deconcentrated services in each region (OFII territorial directorates in close collaboration with the prefectures) to ensure the management of all the accommodation available for asylum seekers in this territory, in order to accommodate on the one hand, asylum seekers registered at a one-stop shop in their area, as has been the case*



until now and on the other hand, asylum seekers referred to their CAES within the framework of regional orientation, which is the main change in this plan” (Snadar, 2020:20).

Prefectures have to ensure the fluidity of the national reception scheme by receiving refugees and guaranteeing them an access to housing. Housings are allocated by departmental commissions placed under the authority of the prefecture and made of NGOs (mandated by the government or not), social housing providers and municipalities.

Alongside, the DDETS (*Direction départementale de l'emploi, du travail et des solidarités* - e.g. county directorates for employment, labor and solidarity) collaborates with the prefecture and the housing providers to help refugees access to the labor market.

### *Municipalities*

Finally, municipal actors such as villages or cities, are in charge of a lot of housing policy and action or strategy plans, such as the local urban planning strategy (*plan local d'urbanisme (PLU)*), the local housing programme (*programme local de l'habitat (PLH)*), some financial aid for people living in social housing or otherwise disadvantaged people. That being said, local actors may benefit of financial and practical support in order to implement policies, particularly if they align with projects currently being advanced by the current government and/or national actions plans.

Local actors may also take voluntary commitments, stepping in to save the day when the national level is technically responsible but in default. For example, regrading housing for refugees and other immigrant populations, the Rennes mayor's office made the promise to house all homeless families in order to compensate for a malfunctioning and defaulting national programme. (Ouest France, 2020). Another good example is the decision taken by the metropolises of Lyon and Rennes to convention some squats hosting migrants and refugees. The agreements signed with the squats of Arloing (Lyon) and the Jardin des Poteries (Rennes) allow metropolises to experiment pilot initiatives: allowing vulnerable people to access to a temporary housing solution while making sure that facilities will be restituted at a certain point without damages.

The CCAS (*Centre communal d'action sociale* - municipal/city center of social action) may also be important for people in exile. For example, when refugees cannot find housing and are homeless for a while, they can register at the CCAS address in order to have a postal address. CCAS may also be points of contact and advice when struggling to find housing or needing emergency housing.

### 1.3.3 Third sector actors



Besides national and local authorities, NGOs also play a central role in refugees' access to housing. Indeed, refugees can be supported in their access to housing by three groups of actors: 1) institutions and associations in the framework of the national reception scheme, 2) other associations and citizen initiatives- more or less structured.

#### *Associations acting in line with the national reception scheme*

Several professional actors and associations have been mandated by the government for 5 years to manage housing facilities for migrants and refugees. Their actions are ruled by the Code of Action and Families.

In January 2021, 111,978 places were available for migrants and refugees, among which 8,914 were specifically dedicated to refugees (in Temporary Housing Centers) and part of the 46,632 available in the Reception Centers for Asylum Seekers are open to refugees. As previously mentioned, these places remain insufficient to absorb the demand, as 49% of asylum seekers could not benefit from the NDA in 2020 (SNADAR, 2020).

The social establishments are managed by legal entities under public or private law (associations, SEMs, CCAS, etc.). Their expenses are paid by the State. The most important ones are Adoma, Coallia, Entraide Pierre Valdo, Forum Réfugiés-Cosi and Le Pont, among others. These associations are mandated and funded by the government. They collaborate with prefectures to allocate housing to migrants - notably to refugees, either in centers (CADA and CPH) or in apartments. Each department is in charge of offering refugees a housing solution. Thus, discrepancies exist among departments regarding housing allocation.

*“In France, we do have a national strategy for the reception of refugees, i.e. some guidelines coming from the government. Migrants and refugees are spread across the territory within the first 5 days by the OFII after their registration on the national platform in order to unblock metropolises like Paris. Each region, each department have to receive migrants and refugees. The problem is that, consecutive to the deconcentration of the state, each department organizes the allocation of housing in a different manner, based on different criteria due to the characteristics and needs of the local population. In other words, each prefect has to decide how are the most vulnerable among the vulnerable populations. They decide within commissions composed of representatives of local authorities, social housing providers and associations mandated by the government. Beneficiaries are not necessarily represented in these commission. These associations are usually historical actors in this field and have been selected based on the answer they provided to public tenders. In exchange of subventions, these associations manage shelters, organize the reception trajectory of migrants, help them integrate into the society, etc. It is a sort of transfer of competencies to both local territories and social actors” (Badis Hariti, Diar).*

Due to the saturation of the national reception scheme, and despite major efforts made to increase the capacities at the national level and pressures on prefects to fluidify the



NRS, the offer remains inferior to the housing demand. In such context, housing is being allocated based on general vulnerability criteria established by the OFII in order to make the process more transparent and objective. However, these rules exclude de facto some populations from the DNA, notably NMA (as they benefit from child protection), migrants falling under the Dublin procedures, migrants waiting for a reexamination of their application, etc.

*“Harmonizing practices at the national level is hard because each territory is different. In some departments, refugees will be considered as extremely vulnerable people – like in the Rhône Department - and in others, they will be considered as vulnerable among the vulnerable. But this situation makes it hard, for the beneficiaries, to understand the allocation rule. It is even harder that, when they change status, then the rules, the administrative procedures, their interlocutors, etc. change too. Thus, their access to housing may take longer than they expected due to the time required to assimilate these new procedures”* (Badis Hariti, Diair).

In some departments, institutional or social actors collaborate to implement innovative solutions designed to foster refugees’ access to housing: experimentation of pilot projects combining access to training and housing for refugees under 26 years old in Charentes-Maritime, sacralization of an annual dotation of 500 social housing for refugee households in the Rhône, etc.

*“The case of the Rhône department is unique but interesting: a couple of years ago, before the migration waves, the prefect Alain Regnier ratified the fact that refugees would be considered as a particularly vulnerable population and, thus, require specific treatment. The department decided that each year, 500 social housings would automatically be dedicated to refugees. Such a favorable decision remains rare and, somehow, politically sensitive because it raises the following question: what makes someone more vulnerable – thus priority – than someone else?”* (Forum Réfugié Cosi).

#### *Other associations and citizen initiatives*

Besides large and institutionalized structures, several associations are also acting to receive, help and/or offer housing solutions to migrants. Contrary to their larger counterparts, these associations are less structured, less professional, and focus not only on refugees, but rather on migrant people regardless their status (asylum seekers, refugees, undocumented people...). They are not mandated by the government but act on their own to compensate for the progressive withdrawal of the government from social affairs. They can be of confessional nature or not, can benefit from public subsidies or rely only on donations, and are mainly made of volunteers. They aim at meeting migrants’ needs for listening, psychological and administrative support, legal and linguistic assistance, among others.



The strong presence of voluntary actors raises questions about the roles that are effectively devolved to the latter, who can be considered as the “*institutionalized artisans of local migration policies*”, to paraphrase Bourgois and Lièvre (2019).

### Mapping ecosystems

In order to understand how ecosystems are organized, and identify who are the main actors involved in housing for refugees at the local and national level, we built a matrix based on Czischke (2018)'s methodology.

Collaboration enables individuals to share the resources, competencies and skills necessary to work together in order to achieve a defined common goal (Czischke, 2018). Achieving common objectives often implies working with a multiplicity of other actors, i.e other individuals, groups, organizations – public and/or private, profit or non-profit-oriented, institutionalized or not - at the local, national or international levels. It means examining the type of collaboration (at the organizational level) and cooperation (at the individual level) practices (Poocharoen & Ting, 2015; Czischke, 2018).

The interactions of these two practices lead to the development of co-production behaviors. Co-production can be defined as the fact that an individual, a group or an organization can be simultaneously both the producer and the consumer of the good/service. Goods and/or services are built by their final user in collaboration with other stakeholders willing to contribute in a wide array of ways. The collaboration is, thus, made possible thanks to the efforts engaged by the beneficiaries and/or the project initiator to reach the final objective (Poocharoen & Ting, 2015). As mentioned by Czischke (2018:63), the diversity of actors “*often entails a high degree of complexity, encompassing different motives, institutional logics and behaviour (Mullins, 2006)*”.

Understanding refugees' access to housing in France requires to pay attention to stakeholders and their multi-level interactions due to the fragmentation and great disparity of actors involved in the process: between national-regional-local levels, between public and private actors, mandated and non-mandated NGOs, etc. In other words, it requires to take different degrees of specification and different levels into consideration (Crostack, Klute & Refflinghaus, 2011). To do so, we adopt Czischke (2018) methodology, based on both Alexander and Robertson (2004) and Sudiyono's (2013) seminal work on multi-level stakeholders in the housing context.

The stakeholder onion model (Alexander & Robertson, 2004) has been acknowledged to be a powerful tool to describe multi-level stakeholders' relationships, identify power relations among them and explain their impacts on a given situation. The onion model provides a better understanding who are the main stakeholders engaged in



refugees' access to housing, based on their scope, relative importance and closeness with refugees.

The more directly and operationally involved stakeholders will be in a cause or an organization, the closer they will be from the center of the diagram. On the opposite, the more indirectly involved they will be, the further they will be from the center.

Sudiyono (2013) enriches Alexander and Robertson (2004) model in two ways. First, he categorizes stakeholders based on three elements: their relative legitimacy, control over resources and veto. Second, he distinguishes three different domains to which stakeholders belong: market, state and civil society.

In line with Czischke (2018), stakeholders can be positioned at three different positions:

- Layer 1: Local stakeholders: those who have significant influence in the access to housing thanks to strong local legitimacy and /or strong control over essential resources (financial resources, legal permits, etc.) locally.
- Layer 2: Regional stakeholders: they play an important role in enabling refugees access to housing and operate at the regional level.
- Layer 3: National stakeholders: they are operating at the multiregional or national level. They can be companies, institutional actors, general public, associations, etc. They usually play an indirect (or less direct) role in refugees' access to housing

Figures 1 and 2 summarize the main actors involved in the access to housing for refugees in the Lyon and Rennes metropolises.



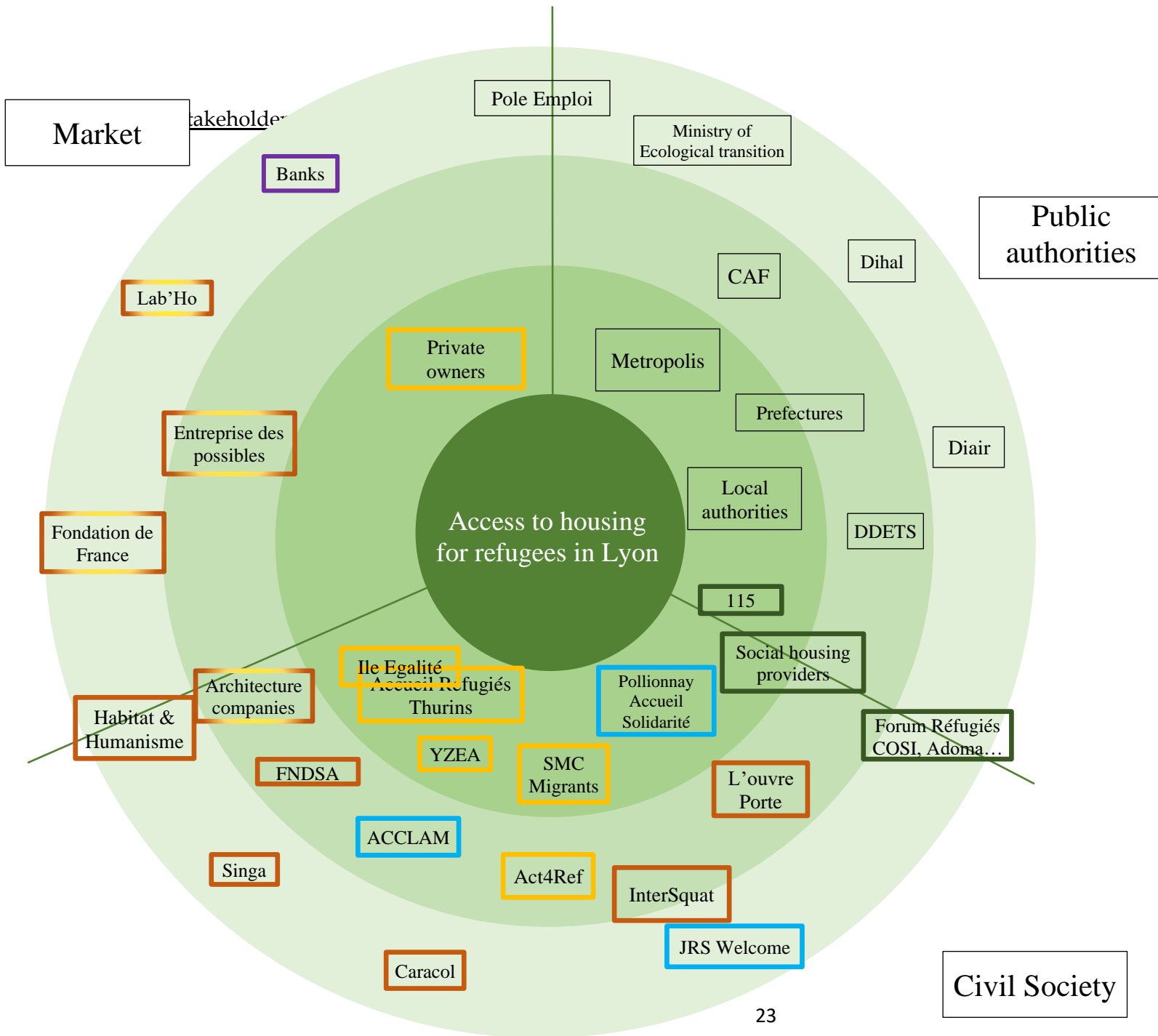
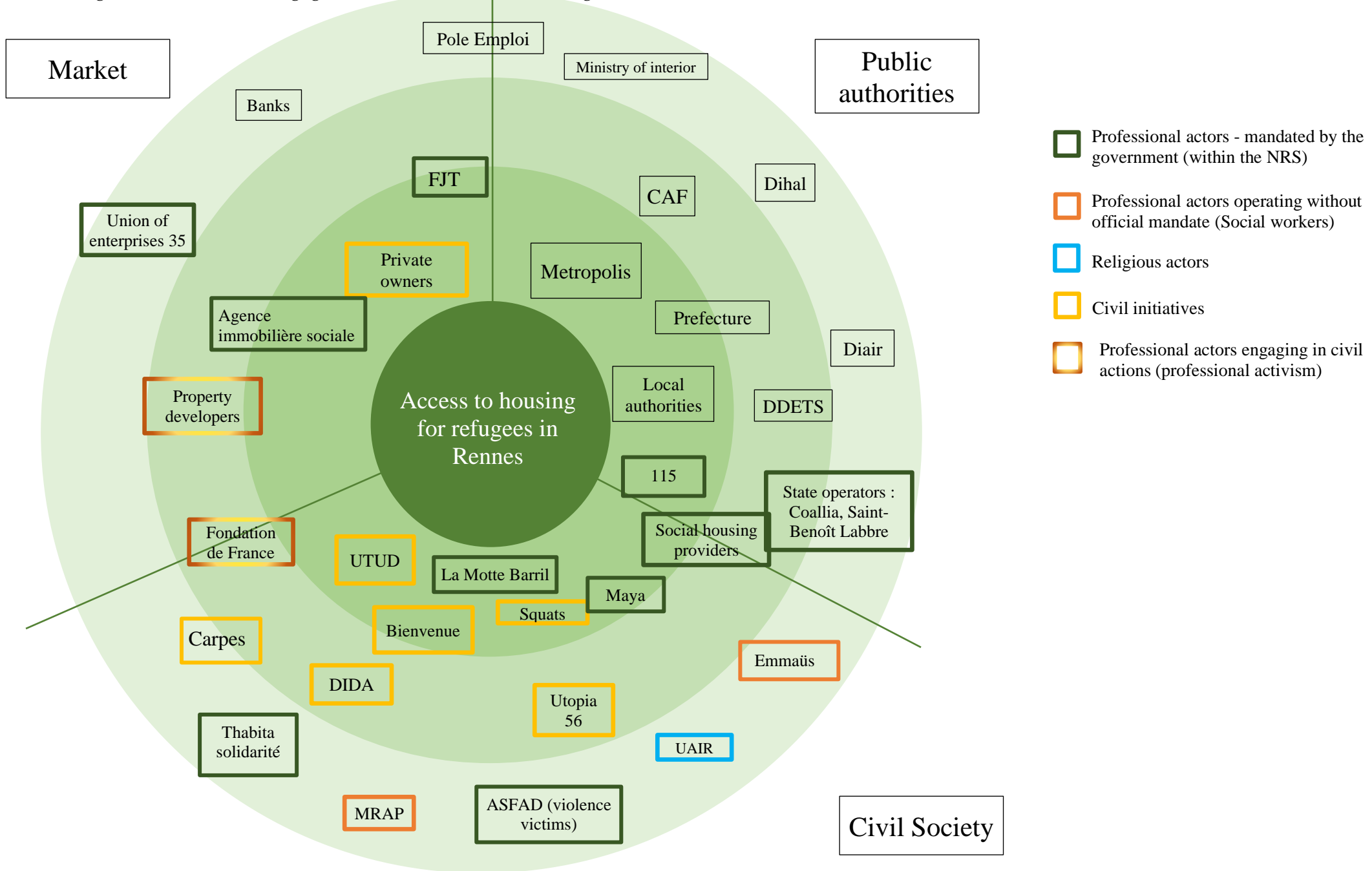






Figure 2. Stakeholders engaged in refugees' access to housing in Rennes



- Professional actors - mandated by the government (within the NRS)
- Professional actors operating without official mandate (Social workers)
- Religious actors
- Civil initiatives
- Professional actors engaging in civil actions (professional activism)

## 1.4 Management and Collaboration

The initiatives carried out in the territory are both top-down and bottom-up but also horizontal.

They are top-down if we consider the actions carried out by public authorities at different levels. As in other areas of public policy, the state and local authorities design public policy and rely on more or less institutionalized associative actors to implement their objectives. As for the associations, although they are largely financed by the State, they do not have much room for maneuver when it comes to questioning the content of actions defined by the public authorities. Among our institutionalized associative interlocutors, some do not question this state of affairs at all (Coallia, for example, defines itself as an actor of public policy), others underline the lack of means or the inadequacy of certain measures concerning refugees (the local Mission, for example).

Some initiatives are rather bottom-up. They are developed by associations (with official mandate or not) or organizations at the local level and replicated at a wider scale by authorities due to their newness, effectiveness or cost efficiency. The interviews on housing conducted with the actors of the Municipality and of Rennes Métropole highlighted the pioneering role of this territory in terms of social housing allocation and actions in favor of exiled people. According to the interviewees, this territory has served as an example at the national level but also for other large cities.

The same observation has been made in Lyon, with the governmental decision to replicate the Accel'Air program (developed by Forum Réfugiés-Cosi) at the national scale. *"The government was very interested in our program, notably the positive and quick results we obtained in terms of integration, and they plan to replicate it at the national level. Accel'air is a single window program: instead of meeting different actors, going through different procedures, etc., refugees meet only one person. To the government's eye, it reduces both the time and the administrative complexity related to integration (thus... the costs)"* (Forum Réfugiés Cosi).

At another level, the associations succeed in a number of cases in alerting the public authorities (especially the City Council and the Metropolis) to the need to change the way in which public problems are formulated. In this way, they play an advocacy role and help shape public policy. Associations like Fondation Abbé Pierre, UTUD (Rennes), Foyer Notre Dame des Sans-Abris or Intersquats (Lyon) seem to play an emblematic role in this respect.

Finally, the initiatives are also horizontal in the sense that networks of actors are formed and allow the constitution of forms of counter-power in the support of exiled persons. The case of the Ouvre Porte (mentioned earlier), the Ile Egalité in Lyon or the Inter-Orga Collective, in Rennes, illustrate this trend.

### Box 3. Presentation of the Ile Egalité

Created in 2020 by a group of citizens after the first lockdown, the initial objective of the Collectif Solidarité Cusset was to offer vulnerable people living in the area the operational support they had trouble obtaining from institutional actors: food supply, French classes, etc. At the end of 2020, a major consultation has been organized by the collective, with the beneficiaries, to get a better understanding of people's real needs. In January 2021, the collectif decided to requisite a vacant building in the area and to create the Ile Egalité (Equality Island), a squat collaboratively run by citizens and beneficiaries, offering people in need services such as:

- Weekly food distributions in the form of a free grocery store open to all without condition, every Thursday afternoon
- A free laundry service available to residents of the neighborhood every Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons.
- Solidarity canteens to make struggles visible, create solidarity and meet each other. The first canteens of support took place with the striking employees of the General Electric factory and the VTC drivers in Villeurbanne. We wish to be a space of relay and support of social struggles.
- Free French workshops, administrative offices, sports activities, and workshops focused on the media
- Temporary housing solutions

Sources: Collectif Solidarité Cusset (2021) and Radar Squat (2021)

It has to be said that collaboration between associative actors and local public actors varies a lot across the territory, depending on local political overtone. As previously mentioned, the fragmentation of the country and the eclectism of French regions/departments/municipalities (especially regarding the question of housing for refugees) generate important differences in terms of housing practices and policies. Some territories are marked by a fracture between associations and local authorities, while others are characterized by a long history of close collaborations. Interestingly, the COVID-19 crisis had an impact on this trend. Indeed, the municipal elections that took place after the first lockdown provoked unexpected political “green” and social shifts. The consequence of these shifts is the emergence of a bigger number of municipalities developing social program to house vulnerable people (such as refugees). These collaborations are, for example, a long-standing characteristic of local

social policies in Rennes (Loncle, 2011), and more recent in Lyon. The inter organization for the support of exiled people brings together most of the associations working in the field of accommodation and housing for exiled people in Rennes metropole. Its creation goes back to a few years and it allows to gather all the weakly institutionalized associations, collectives and trade unions or political parties intervening in the field of housing for exiled people as this member of UTUD explains:

*Well, UTUD is part of the Inter-Orga Collective, and we could even say that it was at the origin of the creation of this Inter-organisation collective in support of exiled people in Rennes. That is to say, it is a collective that was formed at the time of the occupation of La Poterie, which was a former retirement home, which centralised, we'll say, the question of the struggle for the rights of exiled people in Rennes, for a year what. From June 2016 to July 2017, and that's where the inter-orga crystallised, which then became the inter-orga. On the question of housing, there are quite a few collectives in Rennes that are active, there's the Groupe Logement du 14 Octobre, GL14, there's Bienvenue, which also does accommodation, there's Dida, which has a bit of an accommodation component, there's the DAL, with whom we have relations but who are less present in the inter-orga, let's say, who are more concerned with the social housing aspect, so we're complementary to them, let's say, because we're concerned with people... (...) And then after... there are collectives that can mobilise on the question of housing without it being their speciality, I think of the Collectif Sans-Papiers, sometimes they do it. And there are also all the organisations that are not specifically involved in the issues of exiles in Rennes but which are always mobilised with us in the framework of the inter-orga. I'm thinking of the trade unions, and I'm thinking of certain political parties too. And then on the questions of education... There's what's left of RESF35, Réseau éducation sans frontière, knowing that I don't think there's much activity from this association in Rennes. RUSF is also the same, the University Network without Borders, I don't think there's much activity there either, but they're still somewhat linked, and then I'm less of a specialist on the question of education, but there's that axis (a member of UTUD).*

This local network allows associations, including the smallest ones, to exchange on the issues encountered in supporting people and to develop complementary responses in this field. Similar networks exist in the field of food aid.

In general, the field of housing for exiles raises important political questions and is marked by very important conflicts of values (Coutant, 2018). From this point of view, the local situation is no exception to this rule. There are major conflicts between the state and local authorities in the way public policy and its objectives are conceived. In line with the main European trends, national French policies and practices are making the access to fundamental rights (notably housing) more complex. Their typology is creating two categories of migrants, based on their perceived legitimacy: economic migrants are considered as undesirable, when individuals (often intellectuals) persecuted in their countries are, to the authorities' eyes, legitimate. At the regional

and local levels, these fractures are even deeper – some departments taking proactive measures to offer vulnerable people a housing solution while others refuse to do so despite legal obligations.

*“The prefect Alain Régnier (now at the head of the Diarr) created a special status for refugees in the Rhone department in times when the country was not receiving so many migrants. People were kind of positive regarding the fact to offer foreigners persecuted in their country a house, and special treatments. But the migration flows, and more specially the terrorist attacks in Paris and Nice changed people’s minds. Implementing a similar decision today would be almost impossible: people would wonder why they should accept that foreigners have a special treatment, when local citizens suffer too... It would be harder to implement today, even if it is legitimate. Nonetheless, the decision made by the prefect decades ago ensures refugees the access to 500 dwellings in the department. It is clearly insufficient, but it is better than nothing” (Forum Réfugiés Cosi).*

Regardless their will to receive refugees, local authorities are often overwhelmed by the increase of urgent needs, and the progressive governmental withdrawal from social issues<sup>3</sup>. The representatives of the local authorities underlined the difficulty for them to develop a local policy that essentially compensates for the failings of the state:

*When there are people on the street, they (the militant associations) go to the City of Rennes saying: "why don't you house them?" whereas it's a State competence on housing and it's the State that doesn't fulfil its mission and the City comes in compensation. And moreover, it's the State that gives the titles and the problem isn't to militate for people to have accommodation because it's not dignity, it's to go to the Resto du cœur for 10 years, to go begging all your life, etc. The problem is to go to a shelter and to be able to get a job. The problem is to have a residence permit... (a local civil servant)*

Other conflicts are less high profile but also reveal different values. This is the case for the way in which local policy on refugee housing is conceived, depending on the political leanings of the elected representatives.

Furthermore, conflicts also arise in the field of associations, which are subject to competition for public funds or for the recruitment of volunteers. The interview conducted with Forum Réfugiés Cosi highlights this point:

*“The problem, today, is that we have to solve an unsolvable equation: we have to help more and more people, with less and less subventions. The government wants to deal with a very limited number of large associations in order to reduce the number of interlocutors and to have a better control on public spending. They publish call for tender, and associations have to compete to get public funds (a bit like what happens for companies willing to work with the government). Today, the government invests in shelters and programs for refugees so many associations enter this new ‘market’. They are not specialized in migration issues, but they are looking for funds*

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<sup>3</sup> A detailed explanation of these mechanisms is available in D2.2 French Report.

*so they apply and it is starting to be problematic for other professional associations: the competition is fierce, and if they obtain the funds, they will end by calling historical actors like us because they do not know how to do...” (Forum Réfugiés Cosi).*

In this competition for public funds, the most institutionalized associations are often singled out by the less institutionalized and vice versa. Besides competition for funds or volunteers, more and more associations are developing actions to help migrants (notably refugees) due to the rising social demands observed since 2015. The Foyer Notre Dame des Sans-Abris explains that *“today, 68% of the individuals hosted by the FNDSA are foreigners. The profiles of our beneficiaries changed across the years – from national homelessness to migrants – but hosting people in need, regardless their origins, is part of our DNA. However, these people have special needs on the legal, psychological and social point of view. We hired a lawyer in 2015 to help foreigners with their administrative procedures and social workers, we created day centers and shelters to offer refugees a roof for 1 to 9 months... We work in close collaboration with the OFII and the actors operating locally to offer housing solutions to migrants. The specificity of these new beneficiaries pushed us to develop whole new competences and a type of expertise”.*

Within each of the groups, opposition is revealed either on the basis of resources (for example, certain associations with a long history of presence in the country will seem to overshadow the other associations) or for political reasons (for example, among the less institutionalized associations, different conceptions of support coexist both within and between the associations). In the interviews conducted, the anarchist collectives came back to these different ways of conceiving actions in this field.

## 1.5 Successes and Failures

Identifying successes in the public action targeting refugees is not an easy task, considering the great difficulties faced by these populations and the time needed to fully integrate. The interviews conducted with different stakeholders –institutional actors, associations, etc. – highlighted the daily issues faced, leading us to point out the limits of the French housing system.

Regardless their nature, stakeholders all confess having difficulties to meet refugees’ housing needs due to the lack of resources available, the complexity of administrative procedures, but also the existence of internal tensions.

Renaud Payre, Vice-President of Housing in the Metropolis of Lyon, explains that *“as metropolises, the actions we can engage for refugees are limited, as their integration is a state competence: the state handles refugees’ integration, we take care of housing and other social issues. The distinction is thin, and we constantly have to walk on eggshells. Besides these administrative elements, we are also facing some internal and local tensions. As you know, the*

*city and the metropolis changed political orientations during the last local elections. The city and the metropolis have been governed by the same team for more than two decades: a lot of projects have been implemented, but citizens now want a new political and social line for their city. We are trying to impulse changes and to bring new dynamics but it remains complex for two reasons. First, we are facing internal resistances due either to competition among departments and political tensions between the previous and the current teams. Identifying vacant buildings and lands in the Lyon Metropole is, for example, a difficult and long task for these reasons. Second, we are trying to change the way we receive exiled people locally by bringing new actors and experimenting housing projects in the metropole. For decades, the reception and housing of exiled people has been assigned to a historical actor, Forum Réfugiés Cosi, in the region. They have a strong expertise, developed their own way to handle applications, and they did a good job in managing shelters, etc. over the years. However, we believe that benefiting from this expertise is not incompatible with the fact of experimenting new projects, developed by other actors such as singa, caracol or others. The objective is not to put social actors into competition, but rather to diversify social actors so that we can enrich our practices, innovate, change the way we receive people to have better and faster solutions to offer”.*

Despite tensions, several interesting initiatives have been implemented in the metropolises of Lyon and Rennes – either by local authorities or third actors – even if it is too soon to describe them as successful operations. We can cite the actions engaged by Habitat & Humanisme in the Metropole of Lyon – and, at a broader scale, in France – to take care of families leaving CADAs and identified as vulnerable, with little autonomy and with difficulties too great to be referred directly to the local social services. The accompaniment (administrative regularization, schooling, literacy, health, housing, etc.) of these families is carried out by the association's employees, in collaboration with volunteers. For a period of one year, renewable for 6 months, it aims to give these families a minimum of autonomy so that they can stand on their own two feet. Beside this accompaniment, Habitat & Humanisme developed, in April 2018, the “Escalaes Solidaires”, i.e. moments of shared meals, professional integration and well-being workshops. The objective of these shared moments is to create links and regain self-confidence.

If bottom-up initiatives are more common than top-down ones, we can however mention some actions that have been implemented by local authorities to offer refugees a housing solution -either temporary or permanently. The preparation for the evacuation of the squat “Maurice Seve”, in Lyon, by local authorities is an example of top-down initiatives providing housing and social solutions to exiled people.

*“One of the first decision of this new metropolis was to build tiny houses in order to provide exiled a decent temporary house when the squat Maurice Seve has been evacuated. It was a major and symbolic decision, as the overall cost of this operation is almost of 1 million euros. Now that these persons are sheltered, we have to find them a permanent housing solution – and*



*this is what we are doing now. Building tiny houses is a perfect solution, of course, but at least, the evacuated persons were not left in the street while waiting for a social housing. I am proud of our teams and partners because we have been able to move fast: our teams were able to unblock and depollute lands in record time, Hekipia was able to build almost 20 eco-friendly tiny houses in a couple of weeks, and the association Le Mas agreed to take care of the 52 beneficiaries in a couple of minutes. Of course, it did not really please everyone, but watching the commitment, the reactivity of these teams and the positive energy that emerged from them was very inspiring for me, and highly encouraging for the future” (Renaud Payre, VP Housing, Lyon Metropole).*

In Rennes, the housing policy - with its specificities (history, transparency, experiments) as well as the social composition of the territory - seem to favour a reception of refugees that is perhaps less based on mistrust than in other places in the country (Halluin-Mabillot, 2012). This is what this local agent emphasises:

*'It's a public that is super well perceived, on which bah we can imagine... we're happy to recognise refugees, to get involved with refugees, etc. We're happy to recognise refugees, to get involved with refugees, etc. For another public, well in other areas, it's more complicated. So in Rennes, clearly, we're in a very student, young, integrated city, etc. So it's a public that's, well, not a public that we're going to be able to reach. So it's a very promising public (a local civil servant)*

The systematisation of the installation of people in diffuse housing appears to be an interesting orientation to allow an easier integration of people. This is what an employee of a state-operated association emphasises:

*Afterwards, the specificity is that our accommodation is only in diffuse housing, so there is not really any visibility. The people are integrated into social life like any other... they are not stamped elsewhere. It could very well be three young people who share a flat, who are students in Villejean or who come to do their apprenticeship or to the high school next door (an employee of a state-operated association).*

The development of shared accommodation to alleviate isolation also seemed to be a rather stimulating avenue (Launay, 2018), as shown by this employee of a state-operated association:

*Here we have just received a young person who arrived, so who is... as an isolated minor on the territory, so he goes from structure to structure, so he has just turned 18, and he arrives at the CPH. Well, we put him with two dads, in quotes, in the flat, because two rather mature gentlemen because we know that he needs a framework too (an employee of a state-operated association).*

The initiatives of weakly institutionalised associations also contain some very encouraging elements. For example, we can mention the operating methods of UTUDs, which make it possible to house people for several years even though they do

not necessarily have a residence permit or the resources to access social housing, and which thus give them the opportunity to take a breather and initiate their integration process despite their precarious situation. We can also mention the broader support provided, for example, by an association such as DIDA, which not only provides French courses and accommodation for people in solidarity housing, but also carries out numerous cultural and leisure activities, which are much appreciated by exiled people. Finally, as a local success, the structuring of weakly institutionalised associations into inter-organisations, which seems to stem from the partnership traditions of this city, undeniably gives this collective action more strength in the face of public actors or institutionalised associative actors.

## 1.6 Participation

The participation of refugees – and more generally from exiled people – in the management or the housing decision making process remain rare, regardless the actors involved (public authorities, associations operating on behalf of the state or by social landlords). A couple of exceptions must be mentioned, though, often carried out by associations that do not benefit from public mandate. We can cite the council of inhabitants created by Aurore at the 5 Toits (a temporary shelter in Paris) or Caracol, for example.

Public institutions do not, to our knowledge, take initiatives to organise, nor encourage the participation/empowerment of migrants. Several explanations have been brought by the public services interviewed (Dihal, Diar and local authorities), notably the lack of resources and habits, the will to avoid creating false hopes and the fact that refugees are represented in commissions and meeting by associations. According to the Dihal, *“beneficiaries do not take part in the decision making, or the governance. Integrating them would be too complex, too long: we are dealing with a wide number of actors, each department is different... Refugees are represented by associations during commission, etc., but they are not directly involved in the management, or other things. To our point of view, it could create expectations that we would ne be able to satisfy, and thus generate a lot of frustration”*.

In associations mandated by the government, this practice clearly does not seem to be a priority neither, despite the law of 2002-2 which imposes the organisation of consultation bodies with users in medico-social institutions. Several elements can explain this trend: the lack of human resources (notably social workers) to anime collectives and to face daily emergencies/needs, the lack of financial resources, etc.

Habitat & Humanisme explains that *“it is clearly something that we want to develop and that we have to work on. The problem is the following: when one association receives a mandate from the government, the government will give the equivalent (for example) 40 euros/person*

*for X beneficiaries the first year. The association establish a budget, hires social workers, etc. The second year, the government will reduce the subvention from 40 to 30 euros/person, for X + 20 beneficiaries because they put a lot of pressure on associations to host more and more beneficiaries ... Budgets are reducing, needs are rising: it is kind of a vicious circle. As associations, we have to operate with less budget, thus less professionals and more volunteers, we have to act fast and be creative: in such context, it is hard to stop, reflect on our functioning and change the governance in order to include beneficiaries. The second major issue is that there is a high turnover among our beneficiaries: they stay a couple of days, weeks or months and leave. Such a turnover is hardly compatible with the stability required to take part to the governance of housing projects, unfortunately”.*

Besides the resources-related issues, the type of housing has an impact on the participation of refugees in the management and governance of housings. Indeed, the practice of collective and large housing, such as in the 5 Toits (in Paris) can encourage the creation of collective of beneficiaries, meeting regularly with social workers and other stakeholders (artists, etc.) to discuss about current issues, engage projects, etc. The practice of diffuse housing, however, does not help the development of participation initiatives, as this employee of a state-operated association points out:

*“So, maybe my colleagues in the CADAs have been able to set up some. We have... it's the fact that we're diffuse too... which has led to the fact that the participation mode has been... it seems complicated to us to implement it. We have a satisfaction questionnaire at the end. But there is no social life council as defined in the 2002 law.2”*

On the side of the weakly institutionalised associations, attempts are being made to involve people more systematically in the running of the accommodation and housing (Bonnell, 2020). However, the way in which these initiatives are carried out and the involvement of the participants depends very much on the values held by the volunteers (values that are not always shared within the same association). For example, at UTUD, a volunteer explained that some volunteers see their actions as helping exile people, while others campaign to enable them to live in the most "ordinary" way possible in French society.

In a squat, a volunteer member of a collective emphasises:

*Ideally, what we want is that one day we won't need to be there at all. But it takes a long, long time, I think. What we decided in any case in the collective is to... when a decision is taken at the General Assembly by the residents, we do everything, we put everything in place so that this decision, which was taken collectively, is kept. (M. from the collective that created the squat.)*

## 2. Portraits of refugees

The objective of this section is to focus on refugees in order to examine whether their specific needs and profiles are taken into consideration in the housing allocation process. After presenting refugees' needs and requests (2.1), we will focus on households peculiarities (2.2) before providing a set of recommendations (2.3).

### 2.1 Needs: Refugees' needs and requests on access to housing

An analysis of the refugee and exile population in Lyon and Rennes lead to contrasting and eclectic results: because of the diversity of their situations (gender, family status, resources...) and background (curricula, migration paths and trauma, etc.), refugees' housing and social needs are extremely different. A family with children will logically need a larger house than a single person, a refugee studying might need a quiet place, someone suffering from trauma might need a quiet and single place, etc.

Beyond the typology of the housing, it is necessary to take into consideration the specific needs of each household in terms of proximity of public facilities such as transports, schools, or administrations. Placing a family in an area where access to school and/or kindergarten is easy, ensuring that the housing allows for good interconnection with public transport to go to work, etc. Such considerations will facilitate the socio-professional integration of refugees locally. There are therefore no single needs or, as one manager of the Saint Benoît Labre association explains, "*each one has its own needs*". The Saint Benoît Labre association works for the housing and integration of the most disadvantaged and, in the field of migrant reception, manages a CADA and a CPH in the Rennes area.

Interestingly, the consideration of refugees' needs is variable across actors and territories. In the metropole of Lyon, two of the actors interviewed appear to have opposite policies in this matter. They can apply a "single offer" policy, like Forum Réfugiés Cosi, or try to find the better matching between people's needs and existing housing facilities, such as Singa.

The representants of Forum Réfugiés-Cosi explain that "*our policy is to offer refugees a single housing option: if they refuse it, they loose their right to get a social housing and will have to look for a flat on the private market. It might look hard, said like that, but we have so many demands that we cannot comply with the exigences of refugees. In Lyon, each year, between 8,000 to 12,000 of social housing are allocated to vulnerable individuals, for more than 80,000 demands. Other associations like the Cimade will keep looking for housing until they meet refugees' expectations: people can refuse the housing offered as often they want, the association will keep looking. It is not our policy, because we cannot afford to do so.*"

Contrary to Forum-Refugiés Cosi, Singa adopts a more personalized approach towards housing. As previously mentioned, the association connects refugees with citizens who have a room to host them (for 3 to 12 months). They study refugees and hosts backgrounds, wishes and center of interests in order to organize the matching, based on the proposed/requested location of the host and accessibility by public transport, professional activity and interests, etc. The objective is to identify similarities to make the cohabitation as enriching as possible. The manager of the office in Lyon explains that *"this process is essential to ensure the success of the cohabitation, first, but also the good integration of the refugee"*.

All the people we met, whether from the association sector, the State or local authorities, agree that they try to take these different needs into account in the responses they provide to exiles seeking accommodation or housing. Pragmatically, they also know that it is easier to support a person or family whose needs have been best addressed.

However, these arguments of principle and common sense come up against the reality on the ground. The associations or local authority services in charge of accommodation and housing for exiles do not have access to all housing solutions for all situations. For example, this manager of the Saint Benoît Labre association admits that she postponed the reception of a visually impaired man, considering that the proposed accommodation was not suitable for his disability. He could only be accommodated after a whole system of aids had been developed.

This last point highlights a central dimension of the discourse of those responsible for housing and accommodation of exiled people. For them, the main need is the need for support and particularly for *"knowing how to live"*, i.e. in line with society's expectations in terms of practical housing care, noise, housing occupation, etc. (Dietrich-Ragon, 2017). This learning of *"how to live"* is implemented concretely through the monitoring of social workers, but also through the very path that public policies require people to take: from accommodation in adapted structures (CADA, HUDA, CPH, etc.), to autonomous social housing.

The predominance of this need for support masks the importance of another need, in contradiction with the first: the need for anonymity and autonomy. For this service manager from Rennes Métropole, refugees want *"housing like everyone else"*. For him, *"this is the most heard word in the end"* but paradoxically perhaps the least listened to because of the structural constraints that weigh on the availability of housing, but also because of the difficult capacity of the public authorities not to judge the needs expressed by prioritising them between those that appear to be the main ones and others that are more secondary (such as wanting a separate kitchen or a balcony, for example).

## 2.2 Households: Portrait on household compositions, conditions of dwellings

The accommodation and then housing of migrants is theoretically organised by the public authorities. The people received follow a defined pathway from supported accommodation (CADA, HUDA, etc.) to autonomous accommodation in a social or private residence, throughout the asylum application procedure until they obtain their residence permit. Refugee status opens up common law, and the persons concerned are therefore entitled to social housing (Dietrich-Ragon, 2017).

During the asylum application procedure, placement is orchestrated by the OFII, which 'manages' the flows by assigning and moving the people concerned over vast geographical areas without the persons being able to oppose this mobility. Indeed, this young Sudanese man describes how he was sent by OFII to Lorient and then to Saint-Brieuc. This mobility meant cutting himself off from his friends, which he was afraid of. Despite the intervention of social assistance, this mobility could not be avoided.

*I tried to refuse because I was really unwell. You're with people from Calais, even from Italy and all that, and then, all of a sudden, OFII decides to send you elsewhere. And you don't understand why (...) I tried with the social worker, I said 'I don't want to go, I don't want to leave my friends and all that, I don't want to'. She told me 'no, either you accept, or OFII gives you a month to sort out your situation and then they throw you out'. It's like a threat in fact (...) As long as you don't have the papers, it's the OFII that manages your things and all that. And then you are obliged to accept".*

This is the context in which the public systems operate, and it is in this context that the reception of exiles in Rennes must be carried out in practice. In reality, the situation is also made more complex for several reasons:

- Not all applicants for refugee status obtain it. The absence of a residence permit prevents the people concerned from hoping to obtain permanent accommodation and to register for social housing. The absence of a residence permit also adds to the ranks of people considered to be undocumented, who are no longer entitled to the accommodation facilities set up by the state and local authorities and who, when they remain on national territory, can only turn to associations in the hope of obtaining a more or less temporary place to stay, if not a squat or the street.
- The reality of housing in Rennes, Lyon and other metropolises is that there is a high level of tension in the property market, which impacts on access to housing for the most disadvantaged and particularly for exiled people. In fact, the actors involved in housing for exiles have to deal with a persistent shortage, each doing everything possible to capture vacant housing, entering into real competition between them.

The main issue is therefore to obtain vacant housing in order to adapt it and allocate it to the people waiting. The shortage of housing does not allow, very often, that a family or a single person has an individual housing. Housing is often shared and sometimes even in dormitories. This is especially the case for single men for whom it is most difficult to secure a single room.

## 2.3 Recommendations

Our report presented the main actors, actions and challenges related to housing for refugees in France. It outlined refugees' needs in terms of housing, and portrayed the new configuration of households, smaller and younger than before.

We will now propose a set of recommendations to policy makers, housing owners (private and social) and third sector actors (notably associations) regarding three dimensions, namely procedures (2.3.1), housing (2.3.2) and beneficiaries (2.3.3).

### 2.3.1 Procedure-related recommendations

Accessing to housing - notably social housing - remains a long and complex process in France. Several recommendations will be presented in order to improve the housing related procedures.

#### *Reduce the delays necessary to obtain a construction permit for social housing*

The lack of affordable solutions, coupled with the rise in property prices and social needs, makes it even harder for refugees to find a decent place to stay. The metropolis of Lyon registered 80,000 applications for social housing in 2020, but was able to give a positive answer to only 8,000 of them. Besides the rise in property and land prices, the lack of affordable housing can be explained by the time required and the administrative burdensome related to the attribution of construction permits.

In France, the attribution of construction permit depends on local authorities. Any project whose surface would be higher than 20m<sup>2</sup> requires a permit and an architect when the buildings exceed 150 m<sup>2</sup>. Applications are analyzed by competent authorities that have 3 months to give a verdict. However, applicants often need up to a year to obtain it. *“In theory, local authorities have 3 months to give you an answer – starting when your application has been declared as “complete”. In reality, they often ask for one extra document, and another, and another, etc. and every time that they ask for a new document, the delay re-start from scratch. The thing is that local authorities often lack competent persons to study applications, and they hardly meet the delays, so they ask for more documents in order to have more time. Then, you also have to comply with people that will try to terminate the permit, because they do not want to have social housing close to their home, they are opposed to a*

*project, etc. So, in theory, you can have a permit in three months, but the reality is sadly different”* (interview of a construction project manager). Increasing the social housing capacities could be facilitated, at the local level, by making the attribution of construction permits smoother and faster.

#### *Making allocation processes more individual and transparent*

Our study pointed the negative impact generated by the standardization of the allocation processes for social housing. This standardization tends to invisibilise applicants, and generate several negative externalities, such as a feeling of frustration, helplessness, assistantship and isolation. Furthermore, it does not take into account the specific needs and desires of applicants, in terms of housing typology, neighboring and location. As a consequence, people remain in the application process for years or, in some cases, are excluded from it and condemned to precarity. Individualizing housing allocation procedures from inception would facilitate the integration of refugees, and reduce widely the hidden costs related to existing social procedures.

#### *Encouraging the temporary occupation of vacant buildings*

Due to its core characteristics, the housing market remains scarcely flexible and responsive to the evolution of social needs. Offering rapidly housing to people in need requires the implementation of new strategies and contracts. The experiments ran by the metropolises of Lyon and Rennes regarding the conventioning of squats led to positive and promising results, not only for the occupants and the local authorities, but also for the closest stakeholders (better acceptance from neighbors, etc.). In the same vein, the temporary occupation of vacant building (relay housing) presents interesting advantages, such as the valorization of a given location, the protection from vandalism, etc. Encouraging the implementation of relay housing would not only be beneficial for refugees – as it would ensure that they are housed in safe and decent places, but also to owners and local authorities as it would ensure the protection and the integrity of their real estate assets.

#### *Avoiding competition among associations*

The new strategic plan for the reception and integration of refugees, implemented in 2017, coupled with the progressive deconcentration of state powers, initiated in 2010, participated in the reorganization of the housing procedures and actors. Our report highlighted the impacts of these institutional changes on social actors, notably on associations that have to compete and merge in order to reach a critical size and win public bids. The competition created between associations has negative consequences on both the refugees and the members of these associations (employees and volunteers) as it tends to generate stress and distrust. The initiative engaged by Inter-Orga, in Rennes, open up promising perspectives in terms of collaboration between associations. Instead of placing associations under competition, it would be more



interesting and efficient to encourage them to develop networks of solidarity made of associations having complementary competencies. Besides benefiting for their mutual expertise, these associations would gain visibility and legitimacy, being more audible when pleading and in a better position when answering public tenders. Recognizing the competencies and expertise developed by these associations across time – through official certification – would also participate in the legitimization of their actions.

### 2.3.2 Housing-related recommendations

Besides procedures, three housing related recommendations can be addressed to policy makers, authorities, housing providers and associations.

#### *Mobilizing more the private housing stock*

Our study revealed that accessing to the private housing markets remains difficult for refugees. Besides high rental costs, refugees often face invisible barriers generated by their lack of financial and social stability. Private owners tend to be reluctant to rent to vulnerable people such as refugees – preferring people having more stable and secured situations. Despite the existence of program supported by the government (e.g. Solibail) or social housing providers (e.g. sliding lease), mobilizing private housing remains a difficult task due to owners' lack of awareness about these systems. Promoting Solibail, sliding lease (or related programs) could participate in unlocking the access to the private housing stock for refugees. This trend could be reinforced by the implementation of temporary tax exemptions or reduction for owners renting a private accommodation to vulnerable people for a minimum time (e.g. 5 years).

#### *Adapting the typology of housing to new migration realities*

Along with the migration flows, the typology of households changed over the past years. Households are smaller (1 to 2 kids max), and many refugees are coming as single individuals. However, the existing housing stock – built in the 60s and 70s to host large families, is not adapted anymore to this new public. This misalignment has three consequences: the allocation of housing too big for single refugees or small household, the lack of housing and the use of forced cohabitation – refugees having to share the same flat and, sometimes, the same room. If cohabitation can be relevant when sheltering people – i.e. for a limited amount of time, it can be hard to handle on the long run for refugees that need quiet / safe places to heal their wounds and rebuild themselves. Improving refugees' mental health and wellbeing also implies that we reconfigure social housing to make it smaller and individual, so that people can benefit from their own quiet place. This is particularly important for young refugees (under 25), as they tend to be the most exposed to housing deprivation, and cannot access to financial aid due to their age (the solidarity revenue being offered only to people older than 25).

### Housing and the availability of public services

Housing has a key role in the socio-professional integration of refugees: it can facilitate or slow down the process. Our reports pointed that the proximity of public services (notably transportation, kindergarten and schools) from housing is crucial for refugees, as it helps reducing the risk of isolation, and facilitate the completion of administrative procedures, the search for job and/or frees time for training. Thus, attention has to be paid to the proximity of public services when allocating housing to refugees, notably in rural areas that tend to be scarcely doted in public services.

### 2.3.3 Refugees-related recommendations

In order to facilitate refugees' integration, our analysis led us to formulate three recommendations.

#### Allow asylum seekers to enter to the job market

As previously mentioned, the rise of housing prices and the lack of affordable housing solutions make it hard for refugees to access to housing – notably on the private rental market due to their lack of financial resources and stability. The French system does not allow asylum seekers to access to the labor market, preventing them from accumulating enough money to live decently and prepare their access to the rental market. Asylum seekers are often constraint to turn to undeclared jobs, feeding precarity and trafficking of all sorts. Allowing asylum seekers to work legally would not only reduce their vulnerability and exposure to criminal organisations, but also give them the resources necessary to gain autonomy, the feeling of belonging and contributing to the society and, at the obtention of their status, access to the housing market.

#### Make the housing allocation and management process more inclusive

Our study highlighted the frustrations generated by the top-down allocation and management system. Including beneficiaries into the governance of social housing would increase the perceived transparency of the allocation process, contribute to have a better understanding and matching between people's needs and expectations, but also to empower refugees.

#### Give social, institutional and medical actors special training

Consecutively to the migration flows, social, institutional and medical actors have been highly solicited by immigrants in France. The interviews conducted with the medical and social experts allowed us to measure the sense of helplessness of these actors, overwhelmed by the diversity and complexity of refugees' needs. The traumas generated by the migration trajectories, the isolation and feeling of despair caused by

the time spent in limbo in the countries of transit and arrival, the fear of loneliness when obtaining the international protection... these heavy elements are hard to handle. As explained by Nicolas Froment, sociologist of mental health, "in hospitals, psychiatrists and nurses are usually trained to deal with traumas or illnesses that are common here: depression, anxiety, anorexia, etc. When it comes to migrants, they are lost because the traumas that they went through are close to what medics see on war zones. They suffer from PTST, and psychiatrists are not trained to deal with it". Regardless their status and profession, actors engaged in refugees' reception and integration processes are often not sufficiently trained to deal with these new pathologies, and refugees' specific needs. Thus, developing specific training (medical, administrative, legal etc.) for stakeholders would improve the efficiency of their actions and improve the integration process.

Table 1 summarizes the recommendations addressed to public actors, housing providers and NGOs, regarding procedures, housing and refugees.

Table 1. Summary of recommendations

	Public actors	Housing providers	Associations
Procedures	<p>Reduce the delays required to obtain a construction permit for social housing.</p> <p>Individualise more housing allocation processes.</p> <p>Develop the conventioning of squats and, to a broader extend, infill housing to ensure decent housing for people while protecting the integrity of real estate assets</p>	<p>Move from a logic of standardization to a logic of individualization of housing allocation procedures</p> <p>Increase the transparency of housing allocation procedures</p> <p>Sanction a fixed number of housing units for refugee populations</p>	<p>Densify the solidarity networks by encouraging the bringing together of associations with complementary functions (provide specific and rapid support to refugees, have more weight when responding to public tenders)</p>
Housing	<p>Mobilize more of the private housing stock by intensifying the use of Solibail and property tax exemptions/reductions</p> <p>Creation of transdisciplinary and even international think tanks to propose new alternatives</p>	<p>Develop the concept of sliding leases on a large scale to allow refugees to access private housing</p> <p>Offer individual housing units of smaller size adapted to the new types of homes and single refugees</p>	<p>Educate social landlords and homeowners on the availability of vacant units/buildings through advocacy</p>
	<p>Ensure the existence of public services near housing in order to fight against the isolation of refugees and facilitate their socio-professional integration</p> <p>Avoid isolating people in distant areas</p>		
Beneficiaries	<p>To open the right to all exiled persons to work so that they can become autonomous, members of the host society and avoid trafficking</p>	<p>Greater inclusion of refugees in the allocation and management of public housing</p>	<p>Training associative actors and social workers on the specificities of refugee populations</p>



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