

**Learning from history:
Changes and Path dependency in the social housing sector in Austria, France
and the Netherlands (1889-2008)**

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Introduction

The history of social housing has begun more than one century ago; under the action of old Europe's most governments it has become over the decades a key element of local and national welfare policies. A century later, the landscape is contrasted, and some fundamental interrogations are emerging about the role of a social sector in the housing supply.

In this paper we would like to state that European social housing history is interpretable through the combination of two complementary notions: path dependency and change. We are arguing that socio-political experiences and practices on national, regional or municipal levels remain potentially powerful in the following historical stages but do not stop from unexpected change. The interpretative framework this paper is taking in consideration results from the statement that change is produced by a combination of inherited experiences, and mutations taking place in the successive demographical, political, social and economical conjunctures. Due to its different institutional contexts, and the varying interplay of actors, the history of social housing reflects the emergence of a complex patchwork of disparate legislative, financial and architectural realities rather than a linear evolution. Our paper will therefore not offer a chronology of social housing but a descriptive and analytical view on main historical sequences in which the fundamental ideas of social housing were implemented and recomposed in significant configurations of actors and institutions.

From this perspective we are interpreting also the title of our paper. "Learning from history" does not mean learning about the future via studying history: This 19th century socio-technological planning approach has been deconstructed for a long time as a key ideology of the industrial modernity. A socio-historical approach seems interesting to us since it can put in light the dynamics of change and reconfiguration of the social housing system, and that allows us finally to put adequate questions for further investigations.

The article proposes a general view with a specific focus on three countries where the social housing sector traditionally has been relevant in terms of stock, and where it still represents a large percentage in the whole housing supply today: Austria, France, and the Netherlands. Whereas France has the more important stock in absolute numbers (4.230.000 units), the Netherlands has the higher rate (35% of the dwellings are social rental), and Austria the larger rental sector (45% in total, 27% social). All three countries are sharing a strong tradition of municipal power in their biggest cities (Paris, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Vienna) where a huge proportion of the total supply is composed by social housing (e.g. Vienna 40%). In each of these countries the development of social housing is deeply rooted in its political history and in the development of the modern welfare state as well. Therefore, the country-specific

focus offers the opportunity to observe different administrative and geographical layers of social housing policies. The structure of social propriety, and its transformations, can be observed in its diversity (state owned, municipal, cooperative, and associative).

Starting point of our paper is a response to six main segments of social housing history. On the basis of this descriptive retrospect the second part of the article proposes an analytical view on the processes which helped to create that fascinating patchwork of social housing which "affirms its originality and its singularity" (Guerrand...). A selection of emblematic issues for further research is presented at the end of the article.

From the origins to the current times: A Patchwork of practices and experiences

1. The origins: Housing reshaped by utopia, philanthropy and industry

During the 19th century, sooner or later according to the regions and countries, industrialisation process attracted masses of people looking for jobs in urban regions where the new emerging industries were concentrated. The cities were not equipped for these large flows of migrants: Poverty, overcrowding, poor hygienically circumstances, diseases (e.g. the 1832 cholera epidemic in Manchester) and other misery were the results. Speculators, factory owners and smart investors built tenements in high densities and with low or even lacking heating and sanitary standard to house the newcomers. The demographic development is indeed impressive: In Vienna for example the population quintupled from 400.000 to 2.000.000 within the second half of the 19th century. The crowds were housed in bad equipped blocks ('caserns') or barracks, according to the census of 1869 10 to 20 percent (depending on the district) of the population lived as so called "Aftermieter" or "Bettgeher" which meant that they only had access to a bed during a couple of hours, and often they even had to share the bed with somebody else. A similar situation can be found in most of European cities as for example in Paris as well where, according to Jacques Bertillon analysis of 1891 census, houses were not as overcrowded as in other European big cities such as Berlin or Vienna. Nevertheless, Paris reached one million inhabitants in the middle of the century, and the population was more than 2.900 000 in the eve of 1st World War.

In the period of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation a regulatory and planning vacuum was the dominant characteristic in particular with regard to the housing situation. The first initiatives for better housing were carried out not by local or state authorities but by private actors such as companies, factory owners and philanthropists. These activities can be observed all over Europe, with some early remarkable examples it started even earlier. Schneider at Le Creusot, Menier at Noisiel, Godin at De Guise, Dolfus in Mulhouse, XXX in the Netherland. In Austria, the first housing estates for working class were constructed by factory owners since the mid of the 19th century, at the same time private foundations emerged, donated by aristocracy and bourgeoisie. Foundations (like Rothschild or Rowston) were especially active in countries having a strong habit of religious social commitment like Great Britain and the Netherlands. In these realisations, housing was the core of the organisation of the whole inhabitants' life. For the most global projects, there were controlled and supporter "from cradle to grave". Being more or less collectivistic or libertarian, aimed to support private ownership or promoting renting

tenures, the philosophy was always to organise the relation between work force and capital in the more profitable way for their promoters. However, the numbers of these new forms of “social housing” remained negligible; the majority of working class people continued to live in extremely poor housing conditions.

A combination of social motivation (injustice), economic profit (healthy workmen), circumstances of contagions (diseases don't stop at the border of the wealthy neighbourhoods) and the fear for uprisings created the conditions for Housing Acts in all European countries at the fin de siècle. Belgium has been the first in the world: 1889, Great Britain came second, with the Housing Working class act voted in 1890. In the Netherlands the Housing Act was accepted in 1901. In France, Loi Siegfried (1894) was followed and completed by Loi Ribot (1908) and Loi Bonnefoy (1912) that created the Public Offices of HLM. In Austria, the 22 December 1910 Act introduced a banking system for providing money from taxes for housing construction, and the possibility for the State to support housing construction initiatives by guarantying the funds. In the Netherlands, the *Woningwet* has been voted in June 1901. This law has been the starting point of the organisation of the land submitting private owners' interests to the community: in that sense, it has implemented “social municipalism”: in Amsterdam, a respectable amount of dwellings have been constructed or renewed, under the influence of Florentinus Marinus Wibaut. Belonging to the catholic gentry, this “social entrepreneur” has become a figure of the “red Amsterdam. The first history of social housing is rich in such proactive bourgeois.

Although local and national situations differ very much, the start of regulated social housing was similar. In 1914, even if not with massive effects in terms of realisation, the conditions for combining private and public initiatives were fulfilled. Resulting from a large consensus from right to left, these policies mixed, with different intensity, actions on the tax system, reorientation of savings in favour of housing construction initiatives, tentative of tenants' protection, support for home ownership, creation of housing associations and administrative instruments to combat housing misery. Considering the fundamental ideas and the key elements of a regulatory housing policy, it can be said that the system of “social housing” is basically installed at the eve of the First World War. Certainly, this regulatory policy was implemented against the background of specific national contexts and traditions such as the degree of urbanization and other social or cultural (including religious) specifics, the characteristics of the emerging nation state and the structure of its political system, of its civil society and party system. Related to these different contexts and traditions the founding ideas of social housing have been set into practice by different but inter-related actors. Framed by the dynamic of this interplay, the implementation of social housing became a key element of social welfare in industrial societies, leading to a patchwork of realisations and experiences which cannot explained by theories of divergence and convergence that are based on typologies.

2. Municipalities' commitment to social housing: Defining social housing as a social project in the context of the new emerging local welfare states

Writing about the “needs of the working class”, the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs pointed out in 1912: “The working class is not yet aware of the social importance of housing. It is permitted to see this as one of the most certain effects of

the weakening among their members, due to the abnormal working conditions, of feelings and social bounds.

It is quite evident, that the social question becoming crucial in the 19th century in the context of the class struggle between labour and capital, asked for concrete political answers, and the legislative framework which was carried out around the turn of the century in almost all European countries represents an important first step in the implementation of such a policy. However, these Housing Acts did not stimulate immediately the provision of social housing; it was not after the First World War that social housing was being built in relevant quantities. The rather long time lag between intention and implementation was an effect of the fundamental socio-political change at that period, where old European empires have been defeated and had to make a new start, new nations were created, and new ideologies got power, while the war had caused for large damages and shortages. In this context, state (in the main municipal) authorities and other political and societal actors entered the social housing system: political parties, trade unions, associations and cooperatives, the latter created sometimes quite earlier without playing a very strong role so far.

In Austria, after the declaration of the First Republic (1918) and the administrative independency of Vienna as a proper province (1922), the regional (social democratic) government of Vienna started a series of important activities in the field of social housing, whereas outside the capital social housing activities remained marginal. The Red Vienna social housing policy had a unique standing in Austria and represented a key element in the creation of a *local welfare state*. Between 1919 and 1934 about 64.000 dwellings were built, with high architectural standard and innovative elements in the equipment (e.g. the so called one-kitchen-house, the Frankfurt kitchen system of Margarete Schütte-Lhotzky, or the system of municipal libraries and public swimming pools). In the Netherlands – neutral during WW I – the national government heavily intervened from 1916 onwards. Large subsidies were provided to stimulate housing construction. These years, until 1930, has been an important period in Dutch social housing. Many estates were built, with a high designed architectonical quality, spacious dwellings (for those days) and often designed in garden city like environments. The so called Amsterdam School got international fame: there more than 30 000 housing units were built from 1915 to 1921. The underlying ideas were to uplift the population. These kinds of social housing areas were not only built in the major cities, but in towns all over the country. Most of them are still highly appreciated and have got a monumental status at present (De Vreeze, 1993). In France, even if companies still provide the larger number of accommodations for their workers, the HBM start to develop on a municipal base. So called Public Offices start to develop collecting, building and managing houses for wage-workers. The first one was created in La Rochelle in 1913 and the Office Public of the Seine department in 1914. In 1920, there were in France 38 public offices for HBM, and 452 private societies of HBM and 82 societies for real estate loans. If in Paris and Lyon, precursors such as Henri Sellier or Lazare Goujon were fighting to enlarge the social housing stock and tackle the slums (50 000 were constructed on the “zone”, the former military circle around Pairs, 1.500 in Villeurbane Centre), the realisations are still very few.

With the "municipal turn", often accompanied with the establishment of a local welfare state, social housing became a central instrument not only in combating the accommodation misery of the working and popular classes in the aftermath of WW I,

but also in a broader sense in stimulating mass pedagogic and moral reformation. The new established system of social housing was therefore strongly selective and systematically linked with a system of control, as it was represented in municipal initiatives such as Control-Wohingen in Dutch cities – aimed to receive persons considered as unable behave decently in a normal house – or through the “Visiteuses sociale” in France. The enrolling into Unions or left wing parties was also a way to select working class families that should be admitted in the social sector of housing.

3. The great depression and its effects for social housing

The 1st World War destructions had led to a more interventionist attitude from States, mostly local authorities. 1929 world economic crisis caused huge economical and political consequences everywhere, but the results differed. In the Netherlands, the government subsidies for housing were frozen from the mid 1920s onwards. The private sector took the lead, resulting in mostly privately rented housing. Meanwhile, high unemployment rates increased which created payment problems, evictions and vacancies at the same time. In Austria, the economic crises provoked a radical diminishment of the constructions activities after 1931, the civil war 1934 ended with the defeat of the Red Vienna. The period from 1934 onwards is characterized by local (Austro) fascist and, later on when Austria was incorporated by Germany 1938, the Nazi-regime. In this period some social housing activities continued, strongly characterised by right wing ideologies, but rather marginal especially in the Nazi period. In France housing provision within the cities differed. Where in Austria and the Netherlands the large part of urban housing was provided by the social sector or the market rented sector (next to owner occupied housing for the better-off), in France the employers had a major role, comparable with the situation in the early days. The mainstream of the production for working class people have been provided by entrepreneurs. Just before WW2, the outcome of public involvement is very modest: the number of houses provided by employers is double than those provided with contribution of public founding (900 000 / 1 800 000). By its characteristics, social housing remained a mass accommodation for working class people ("maisons de rapport").

4. Towards housing for all? Mainstreaming of social housing after World War II

The three decades following the 2nd World War are often considered as the “golden age” of social housing, “les trentes glorieuses” according to the French expression. And yes indeed, the largest numbers of social housing have been constructed during this period, but one should remember that it was only a part of all housing construction. Being generally well designed and well equipped, even if not always optimally situated, social housing was attractive, in a context of general shortage, not only for working class people but also for middle class. This "mainstreaming of social housing" is embedded in a functionalist understanding of the modern society and in the implementation of the post war welfare regime as well. Accessibility, functionality, and uniformity are the guiding concepts of the social housing policy which aimed to provide affordable housing for the employed and their families. Effectively, social housing provided for millions of households a very much appreciated improvement of their housing situation.

The mainstreaming of social housing actually didn't start right after WWII, when much of Europe had descended into social, physical and economic chaos. In both the

Netherlands as in France about twenty percent of all housing had been destroyed or damaged; in Vienna, 13 percent of housing had been destroyed. In France, where the interwar housing production had been half of that of Germany and Britain, the WWII destructions aggregated the already insufficient housing of the 1930s. The immediate post war priority for many countries was to rebuild their economy. By the 1950s, however, family formation and the post-war baby boom had placed even greater demands. During the 1950s and the 1960s, the provision of sufficient housing got a political top priority. In France, colonial wars and industry came first in the agenda, but the achievement of a so called “techno structure” composed by banks, building companies, architects, urban planners and engineers belonging to the “modern movement” finally provided a very strong basis for a new dynamism of the construction sector. An agreement occurred between government and Companies: with the “1% law” (1953), every enterprise that employs more than 50 workers must invest in social housing construction. In Austria, social housing became a general agenda of the post-war corporatist welfare regime on the national level on which social housing did not played a key role so far. While the municipality of Vienna continued its construction activities, the historical milestone in Austria's social housing history is the "subsidized housing act" in 1954 on the basis of which hundred thousands of dwellings were constructed.

In the three decades following 1950, social housing became an important policy agenda for upward mobility of working class on the one hand and for the consolidation of middle class positions on the other. The broad access to social housing represents one main aspect of the so called "elevator effect" (Ulrich Beck) that allowed a majority of the population to participate at the wealth of the economic boom. Social housing policy can be seen as a key factor in establishing and consolidating the national welfare state, following Scandinavian examples. Governments supported housing directly with high ‘brick and mortar’ subsidies. Big cooperatives and non profit housing associations were created, sometimes still linked to the (local) government, becoming strong actors in the housing system.

5. Individualisation and fragmentation: Social Housing at the end of 20th century

The period from the mid 1970s onwards can be characterised by a gradually withdrawal of state related actors from housing. Similar to other pillars of the welfare state, housing as an issue of welfare policy was more and more individualized, i.e. oriented towards the needs of the different milieus of working and middle class people; at the same time social housing lost its centrality as a major government issue. Decentralisation of responsibilities (retreat of national, increasing influence of local and also private actors) on the one hand, and individualisation on the ideological level (each individual should look for his own sake) on the other hand represent the two sides of one medal. Owner occupancy was further stimulated, and in almost all countries (except Austria and the Scandinavian welfare regimes) brick and mortar subsidies were changed into personal subsidies like housing allowances and tax deductions. The disentanglement from central state agency strengthened the position of the non-profit sector (associations and corporations) and the inclusion of private actors as well.

In the Netherlands, the retreat of the central government has led to both more owner occupancy and to more powerful social housing organisations. Private developers who build owner occupied housing became more and more important; the

management of the social rented housing sector became more “professional”. Nowadays, local housing associations are well organised, and have a great say in not only the provision of housing for popular classes, but also in the living environment, the quality of the neighbourhood and the well being of their tenants.

In Austria, the weakening of the post-war corporatist regime was accompanied by a strengthening of market principles in the renting sector (the 1981 tenancy law brought a deregulation of price fixing), and an extended decentralisation of the social housing system (1988). As a consequence of these reforms, but also of socio-demographic changes (e.g. pluralism of household forms and family patterns, aging of population, new immigration), the social housing sector became more diversified and also marked by increasing inequalities (following sector differentiations, different practices of the nine regions, or constructions for different target groups). But the developments are still contradictory: Whereas the changing public discourse provokes a reevaluation of private property and contributes to the stigmatisation in particular of municipal housing, the system of public subsidy, still oriented at the brick and mortar model, remains a highly appreciated integrative part of the normative welfare consensus.

In France, after the peak in 1971 comes a period of stagnation at very low levels as a result of the mutation in the policies, and the shift from brick and mortar subsidies to personal subsidies. Together with the diminution of the rhythm of construction, the structure of the offer is changing: less social, more « medium » and upper products, combined with “very social” to fulfill the gap. At the end of the 1990ies the problematic of “sensitive urban area” brings to urban renewal programs where big social housing estates are to be demolished. The impoverishment of the tenants has been documented, and it results both from selective mobility (middle class leaving) and increasing uncertainty of incomes. To summarize, the state intervention is late, confronted to other countries, technocratic and centralized (national Plans, no development of bottom up corporations), productivist (big estates) and “Modernist” (collective and not individual). The current situation offers the paradox of a very active sector in terms of profits (the whole housing sector, constructions and transactions) and a large range of poorly or even not housed households (about 3 millions according to Fondation Abbé Pierre). No strong planning for social housing construction is developed; personal subsidies are developing while fiscal incentive for private investors and access to ownership is increasing. Three stakes seems to remain on the stage: location (originally social housing has been built where industries have developed, then in the suburbs of the cities, and is now facing a problem of dilapidation), reputation (the image of social housing is getting worse), function (social housing being required to implement two contradictory missions, insure right to housing and social mix).

In the context of the neo-liberal turn which stamps nearly all European welfare states in the late 20th century, individualisation and fragmentation become main characteristics of the social housing system. Whereas individualisation refers both to socio-demographic changes and to the neo-liberal ideology, it is also strongly linked to an increasing fragmentation of the social park. This fragmentation reflects also the structural changes in economy and labour market with its weakening effects for living standards, job-stability, and the equality of opportunities. These growing inequalities leave strong marks in the social housing system.

An analytical view on history

The question for the current times could be: Is social housing still social? In asking such a question, we would like to come back to the idea that behind “social housing” there has always been a relative, but sufficient consensus on defining the common good. Social Housing in Europe has developed as a utopia and a collective project for the modern industrial society (Guerrand). Emerged in the context of the conflictual antagonistic relation between labour and capital, this project was implemented in the power triangle of state, market and societal actors. Equivalent to other elements of the modern welfare state, social housing fulfilled important functions both on economic, social, cultural, and integrative levels. How this on a relative consensus based collective project is achieved in the current period? An analytical view on history can bring some insights. In summarizing our historical overview, the following statements try to model such an analytical view on history.

1. The system of social housing can be seen as a “patchwork heritage”. Heterogeneity of its development can nevertheless be brought back to a fundamental idea that animates the precursors: an answer had to be found in front of the terrible situation of housing of working class peoples. So, for different reasons – fear of the danger of physical, moral and political contagion - working class people housing became considered as an essential dimension of the emerging “social question” in the context of industrial modernity; consequently, the relation between capital and labour and its regulation, being the core of the social question, became the core of the housing question itself. As a consequence, it has been promoted as a structuring dominant element in defining common wealth and welfare for more than hundred years. One can easily understand that this position always implies the possibility of conflicts and competition between actors. In this context, the regime of the system should not be considered as consensual – as it exceptionally occurred at the beginning of the 20th century, and again after 2nd WW – but rather competitive and conflictual since it corresponds simultaneously to different philosophies and political understanding of the “common good”.
2. In the core of the European middle age, some lightened and rich personages have conceived good housing for meriting workers and their family: the Fuggerei, founded at the beginning of the 16th century by Jacob Fugger, one of the first worldwide capitalist financier, is often given as the first “social housing” initiative. But this is a absolute private story. “Social Housing” in our understanding historically starts as a collective political expression at the end of the 19th century. An incontestable founding reference point is the first European congress of HBM (Habitations à Bon Marché) who took place in Paris in 1889. It is interesting to note that this first congress decided to renounce to the old appellation “Habitations Ouvrières” in order to enlarge the targeted population to the larger social classes. The significance of housing as "social" is therefore structurally linked with the emergence of the modern nation state that defines common goods due to its need of social cohesion and its capability of self-regulation. Therefore, social housing is from the beginning not only conceptualized as an aid for poor people but as an instrument to overcome specific economic, social, cultural and integrative problems of the modern society.

3. Since the “founding event” in Paris, the historical development of social housing is embedded in complex and variable configurations resulting from specific arrangements of ideas and architectural conceptions, norms, financial, juridical and administrative dispositions becoming materialised in concrete housing estates and their inhabitants. Obviously, these configurations are framed into specific traditions (i.e. level of industrialisation, character of civil society) and contexts (i.e. economic crises or prosperity, wars and their consequences): We have seen that war, political change and economical growth have introduced new possibility into the usual patterns, using path dependency as a background where initiatives can take place: Dutch Calvinism and municipalism, French associative tradition, Austrian political bi-polarisation are – among others - forces belonging to the past and re-framed by the successive conjunctures.
4. These configurations are based on instable balances of power between the actors: companies, unions, banks, governments, local authorities, societies, non-profit organisations, corporations. As a consequence, the system called social housing never developed one dominant figure for a long period. Private and public interests, central governments and local authorities, left wing and right wing ideologies, individualistic and collectivistic options, big estates and single family units, concepts of architecture, renting and ownership – all these oppositions are never exclusive one from the other. The instability of the system is actually maybe one of the reasons of its exceptional capacity of adaptation and innovation, and it is also the source for its remarkable heterogeneity due to the fact that the actors are in a continuous process of reconfiguration, establishing new alliances and "techno-structures" in adapting the fundamental ideas to new needs and circumstances and the structural characteristics of the path-dependency.
5. Consequently, the question of change is central for our purpose – change as the expression of the capacity of societies to find solutions for the questions they face, in continuity or in contradiction with the previous options. Social housing itself is an answer to a question that required solution: employers and politicians had to deal with instability of the labour force, with overcrowded houses and unhealthy cities, with social disintegration and the emergence of dangerous classes. In other terms, at the origins of social housing, one can find a convergence of interests that have been able to convert into a dominant political position. Innovations in administration, management, financing, architectural conception and technical experimentation developed on this basis... and still do. The question is then to find out the nature and the identity of the dominant configurations.

Conclusive remarks as invitation for further research

The beginning of social housing was embedded in the antagonistic relation between capital and labour, and therefore linked to a certain definition of the social project as a form of common or collective interest. If this structuring force is weakened, the social project in general and the idea of social housing in particular are put into question. The question "Is social housing still social?" is therefore leading back to the structuring forces of modern industrial societies. In this sense, a society without a social project would mean a society beyond the mode of social integration in industrial societies which is traditionally based on three mechanisms: labour market participation, family attachment, inclusion into the welfare system. There are indeed

important indications toward a profound transformation of the societal integration mode, e.g. the instability and precarity of labour force, the questioning and transformation of traditional family patterns, the regression of the welfare state. Since its origins, almost all parameters which had defined social housing as a social project and which have contributed to stabilize collective well-being and social cohesion have changed: the population and social milieus living in social housing; the standards, the needs and conceptions of good housing; the relations between housing and work force; the forms of the collective financing and the collective welfare or protection system. The evolution framed by path dependency tracks in the three countries is still running, but changes can occur very quickly if the conditions allow it.

Where social housing is driving in the future? "From solution to a problem" marks frequently the discussion about the future of social housing. This statement is systematically linked with one key aspect of recent transformations, the tendency toward an economization and privatisation of the social as a collective good. Both concepts usually refer to the retreat of state actors and the dominance of private stakeholders and private interests. But the particularity of this development remains unclear since we do not take into account the privatisation of "the social" itself. As we have learned in the historical excursus the issue of housing was defined as a social one under specific historical circumstances. Whereas social housing in its very early beginning was based on an involvement of mercantilist people (e.g. Fugger), it became an integrative part of the general social agenda in the context of a grave market malfunction in the industrial society. From the actors point of view the struggle between labour and capital and the establishment of the modern nation are crucial in the implementation of the social housing regime. In late modern societies the notion of the social is changing again: The social is no longer identified with a common good but with the concept of personal assistance for those who are not able to live independently on their own individual capacities and acquirements. In this sense the issue of social housing is privatised and individualised again. Thus reframed, we can say that the common good housing is re-transformed into an individual social problem.

A general discussion of the changing integration forces in late industrial society's risks provoking speculative answers. We therefore propose emblematic case studies following the hypothesis that a new patchwork is emerging from the reconfigurations of the social housing system between path dependency and innovation. The idea is to identify moments of social housing history when a space for experimentation, innovation or change has emerged, and to try to identify the conditions in which this possibility have occurred. Ideally, such approach should be global, that means would take into account all parameters playing in each context: economical ones (place of social housing in the whole housing supply, markets and prices formation), sociological ones (who is housed, what kind of needs is it supposed to fulfil, on what philosophical options it has developed), political ones (interactions taking place between the actors and leaders in the political decision making process), cultural ones (which style of architecture is pre-dominant, which socio-cultural symbols are mobilized). We would like to suggest some possible "case studies" that could hopefully continue the present analysis.

1. Continuity and transformation and architectural conception and planning system (big estate against garden cities?)

Cities garden, invented and promoted by Ebenezer Howard, have had a glorious posterity: but today, the ideas of the necessity of a sustainable development are developing, bringing back the dense areas in name of the collective good. More generally, the constructors have to deal with technical and urban planning requirements and people preferences. Social housing providers are competing with other promoters for the innovation.

2. Continuity and transformation in the leadership of local authorities (the end of municipalism?)

It is obvious, for instance, that the recent decentralisation laws have created conditions for the initiative of local actors but also private stakeholders. Generally speaking, the current situation is maybe resulting from a growing and contradictory pressure between an aggressive speculative market and strong interests in favour of collective propriety, and decentralisation is one figure of this conflict, among others. Municipalities could react according to tradition and to new stakes.

5. Continuity and transformation in the role of State (retreat or transformation of the leading role of the state?)

As results from the historical overview, social housing regime has always been embedded in both private and public actions. This is maybe the starting idea to redefine the current changes in term of founding. Which roles state actors actually play in the interplay of actors, in particular in the context of urban renewal and urban development policy?

4. Continuity and transformation in the tenure orientations (towards ownership dominance?)

Considering the history of social housing from the point of view of tenure, it is clear that social housing regime is not at all exclusively rental oriented. In most European countries, government promote owner occupation as a central goal in housing policy. How present times are redefining tenures? Who is defined as a clientele of rent based social housing? What are the relations between the different segments?

5. Social housing, a European or global approach?

The history of social housing is deeply embedded in the history of the European industrial modernity; it played a key role in consolidating social cohesion in the process of rapid industrialization and urbanization, and contributed to this manifold patchwork which has been described as unique for the social housing system in Europe. In the context of the powerful economic development of the newly industrialised countries and its explosive growth of cities by mass migration from poorer and less industrialised periphery regions, the issue of social housing become crucial also in non-European countries. How social housing is conceptualized in non-European countries? How is it implemented, which actors are involved, and what are the target groups?

These are some possible proposals among others. Again, the main goal of this paper aims to present another view on the usefulness of history putting at first place the heterogeneity of the system and the interaction between the ranges of actors. According to this view, the figure of the patchwork is adapted to understanding the dynamics and processes of change, while divergent and convergent views are more adapted to typologies.