

# DEMAND Project – Energy and Justice

Paris, september 25-26<sup>th</sup>

## How to fight against fuel poverty ? The example of Mediation Structures

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# A zoom on action against Fuel Poverty

- ▶ A choice between several possibilities
- ▶ The French situation is characterized by :
  - The importance of the changes due to the liberalisation of the energy sector : a radical change
  - The importance of initiatives in fighting against fuel poverty
  - That leads to social innovation

# Theoretical frame

- ▶ Research problematic : innovation sociology (Alter,2000; Klein & al. 2010, UQAM, CRISES Lab in Montréal UQAM)
  - A publication in : *Pour une nouvelle mondialisation: le défi d'innover* / Juan-Luis Klein & Mathieu Roy (Dir.), Montréal, Presses de l'Université du Québec : 2013
  
- ▶ Social innovation : a way to give answer to new social problems due to a crisis situation when the institutional frame becomes inadapted
  
- ▶ The emergence of mediation structures and their action against fuel poverty seems to be a good example of social innovation :
  - Emerging conditions
  - Evolution of social organisation
  - Results and perspectives

# 1. Context

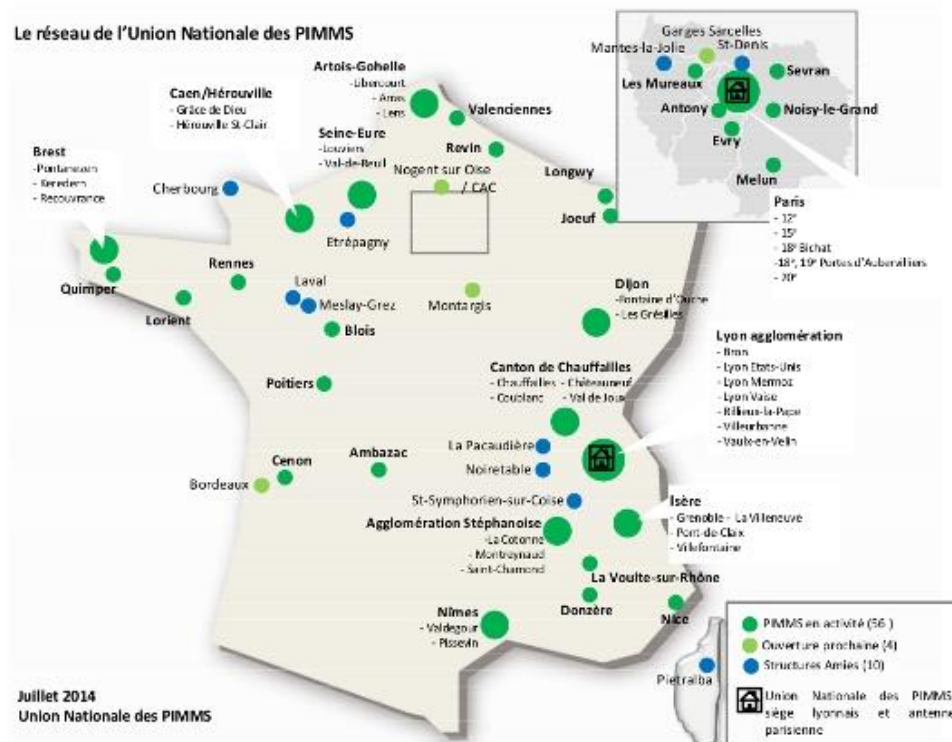
# Strong effects of the liberalisation in the French context

- ▶ The French situation: the State has always been the leader and coordinator of energy policy
  - Historical base : net reconstruction after WW2, nuclear choice, energy strategical State independance
  
- ▶ But strong effects of the liberalisation and the evolution of the energy market
  - Opening-up of the capital of the main operator
  - Separation in 2 concurrential companies
  - The new ambiguous role of a State which is now the main shareholder : between implication and withdrawing

## **2. The mediation structure, a new social actor implied in the fight against fuel poverty**

# The Mediation Structure : an organisational alternative

- ▶ There are **several types** of mediation structures
- ▶ The most known and largely spreaded on the French territory are the **PIMMS (Information Point and Multi Service Center)**



# Results of qualitative inquiries

## Information source

- Contact with different PIMMS
- Observation and sociological qualitative interviews
- In the PIMMS and with different actors

## PIMMS Quimper, Caen

- Management, Mediation agents , Customers

## EDF « Solidarity Team » in link with the PIMMS

## PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

## CUSTOMERS

## SOCIAL SERVICES

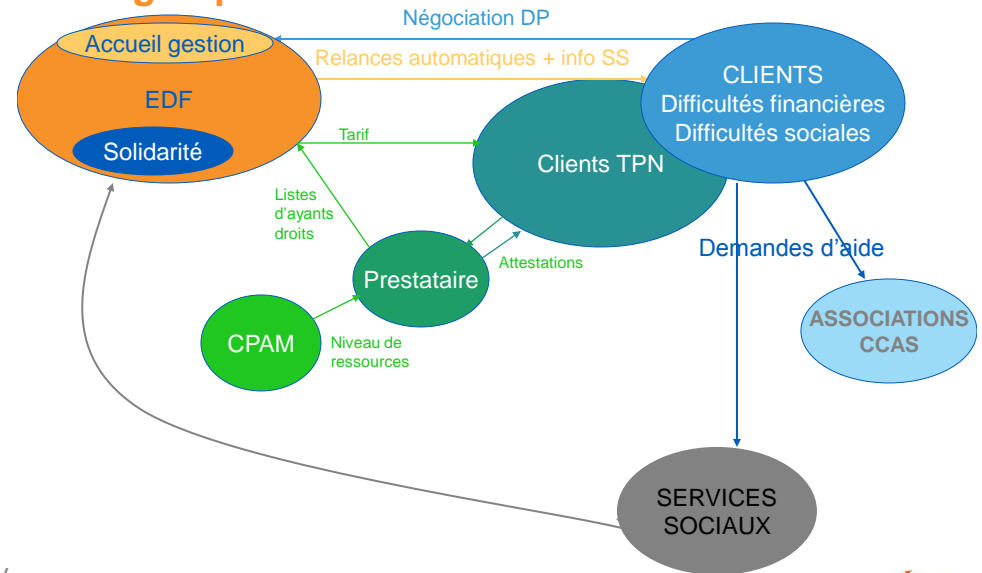
- Organisational complexity, Energy problems are not the priority
- Necessary in order to get the social tariff and different helps
- Some people prefer not to ask for help because of stigmatisation

## ASSOCIATIONS

- Big number of busy consumer and family associations.
- Some are local, most of them are national with a local implantation
- Different kinds of help are available : advice, financial help as a complement to public aid
- More « friendly » than social services (less stigmatisation)

## The PIMMS as the heart of an actors'net

### How to get energy aids



## Different kinds of been helped

- Advice, contact
- Financial help, social tariff



# Innovating concepts (1)

## ▶ The main concepts are :

- PPP model (Publi-private partnership); **shareholders** = Department, City, « public companies »,
- **Closeness** : embedded in the town-districts, conviviality, getting close to people
- Mediation between the customers in financial difficulty and the « public » companies (access to water, energy, transports...), simplifying administrative procedures
- **Global** social help
- Emergence of a **new professional skill** : not a social worker but a link between different organisations and people, a « facilitator »
- **Evolution** of setting-up : from town districts to rural areas

# Innovating concepts (2)

## ▶ Different ways of getting in contact :

- « Customers » reception at the PIMMS
- Visits to home (energy diagnostic, behaviour observation)
- Follow-up call in case of non-paid bills

## ▶ Different kinds of help for people having energy problems :

- To understand an energy bill, ask for a social tariff
- To understand the new organisation of the energy market, choose a supplier
- To learn how to reduce consumption (individual and collective training)
- To facilitate the contact with the supplier and avoid a power cut

## ▶ Importance of a global and personalized help

## ▶ Individual help and collective actions

- Individual training
- Collective actions (partnership between companies, associative sector, social workers...)

# 3. Extension of the social innovation

# Different phases of a social innovation (1)

## ► Phases of a social innovation (Alter, 2000; Harrison & Klein, 2007)

- Context and starting factors
- Emergence
- Diffusion and institutionnalisation
- Extension dynamics

## ► Reluctances at the beginning

- A new context
- Fear of a kind of competition from the social workers' part

## ► Closeness of interests

- Companies in partnership
- Local representative, public authorities

## ► Negotiations and compromises

- A new network of actors
- Development of collective work

# Different phases of a social innovation (2)

## ► From an «invention» to an «innovation» (Schumpeter, 1943; Alter, 2000)

- Appropriation of the concept by the inhabitants
- Enlargement of the actors network : new participations, enriched contacts with the associations (fight against indebtedness)

## ► Extension of innovation

- Organisation of a new kind of innovation : home visiting in rural areas
- Specific problems in rural districts : transport problems, lack of administrative and social services, new situation (old people, new inhabitants...)
- Rural mediation : an experimentation which is spreading
- Importance of the involvement of local actors

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