

Better understanding and measuring extreme poverty with ATD, SC and INSEE

Or :

How to create the conditions for a constructive dialogue between people experiencing poverty and INSEE staff

Background information :

Between 2016 and 2019 ATD-Quart-Monde (ATD QM) is piloting with Oxford University an international research on the dimensions of poverty¹ , work carried out in cross-fertilization of knowledge in 6 countries, including France, Secours Catholique (SCCF) was a partner for this country. This research has been presented to several bodies, such as the OECD and ONPES.

At the end of 2020, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) asked ATD-QM to make proposals for the development of its annual SRCV (Statistics on Resources and Living Conditions) survey: "we are having difficulty measuring extreme poverty, can we think about this together?"

A proposed approach

ATD-QM is proposing a partnership with the SCCF to respond to this request from INSEE. Co-piloting is shared between a permanent volunteer, Jean Toussaint, and an ally, Denis Rochette for ATD-QM, a statistician, Pascale Novelli, and a "development of the power to act" coordinator for the SCCF, Emmanuelle Limousin. Thomas Lellouch and Agnès Brun are the contacts for INSEE.

The whole process is carried out in equivalent representation for ATD QM and the SCCF.

For INSEE, this is an innovative experiment: our contacts, in charge of measuring poverty, are showing a real desire to work with us, by confronting educational and training methods that are not usual in the institution.

The main orientations that the co-chair wishes to take :

- working in a participatory way with people in precarious situations;
- build on research on the dimensions of poverty by working on the interactions between dimensions;
- giving ourselves time to work well: 6 months of work at the local level in peer groups with plenary sessions, before reporting back during a day of exchange with INSEE.

The aim is to **create the conditions for the knowledge gained from the life experience of people experiencing poverty to be able to interact with scientific and professional knowledge**, and for **people experiencing poverty to be able to take their place and have their say with the representatives of the emblematic national institution that is INSEE**,

¹ Programme carried out as part of an international participatory research project "the hidden dimensions of poverty", conducted by ATD Fourth World and Oxford University jointly in 6 countries: Bangladesh, Bolivia, France, Tanzania, the United Kingdom and the United States. In France, the research was carried out in partnership between ATD Fourth World France, Secours Catholique Caritas France, the association of Socio-Cultural Centres of the 3 Cities in Poitiers and a teacher-researcher at the Institut Catholique de Paris

The methodology

The copil is based on the dynamics specific to our two organisations and complementary in its implementation: *the approach centred on the development of the power to act of individuals and groups*² on the one hand, and the *cross-fertilisation of knowledge and practices*³ on the other. This is to produce more comprehensive and inclusive knowledge and methods of action.

The terms and conditions

The idea is to bring together **some twenty people experiencing precariousness and/or poverty at national level**. This national group is **made up of local teams of 2 to 4 people experiencing poverty**, who contribute their experiential expertise and produce an analysis of extreme poverty.

Each local team is accompanied by a reference person or a pair of reference persons (facilitator, volunteer, ally). It facilitates the reflection and expression of all by allowing each person to take their rightful place.

The work consists of three national meetings with all the actors concerned to "form a group" and work in "local teams".

Phase 1 aims to enable participants to appropriate the results of the research on the dimensions of poverty, based on their life experience⁴. The aim is to raise awareness based on the group's experiences in order to build collective knowledge.

This appropriation phase is necessary to create a common culture and shared knowledge before entering into a constructive and informed dialogue with INSEE representatives.

Phase 2, co-constructed with the latter, aims to specify "what questions can we work on with the people from INSEE" so that the contribution of experience can enrich their work.

...

That's what we, the copil, had set out beforehand, as a framework note.

The project is ambitious and very promising for the copil from the start, and all the people involved will share it with us later on.

Once the project was "framed", all the questions of implementation arose:

- Which local teams should be invited? On what criteria?
- how to succeed in forming a group from different local teams that do not know each other?
- how to offer a flexible framework in local logistics, while allowing each team to work on the same aspects?
- how to transmit knowledge developed over 3 years: the 8 dimensions of poverty + the 2 cross-cutting experiences in a few weeks?
- without forgetting to have some input on what INSEE is, the statistics, how poverty is measured today in the institution...?
- How can we create the conditions for everyone to feel comfortable exchanging and working together on 24 June, during the meeting with the people from INSEE?

We also dreamed that if the day of 24 June could take place on the premises of INSEE, it would have a strong symbolic impact for the people and for the project.

And we thought that a thank you should be included in the programme in a concrete way.

² *Sortir de l'impuissance*, Y. Le Bossé, Editions Ardis, 2012

³ *Le croisement des savoirs et des pratiques*, Editions Quart Monde, Editions de l'Atelier, 2008

⁴ *Learning from experience*, B. Bourrassa, F. Serre, D. Ross, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1999

Accepting that we don't know where it would lead, but with the shared belief that it would lead to something strong for all concerned, including ourselves.

By working with two organisations that have their own culture, particularly in terms of organisation (at the SCCF, the support workers are salaried facilitators, at ATD-QM, they are volunteers within the framework of this project or "allies", who can be "volunteers" for other projects) and intervention pedagogies (crossroads of knowledge at ATD-QM, pedagogy of the encounter and awakening to solidarity at the SCCF)

We start from the principle of parity: 2 members from each organisation in the co-cil, about ten people in a precarious situation from each organisation, i.e. 3 local teams from ATD-QM and 3 local teams from the SCCF.

1. The choice of local teams and support staff (who to call on?)

Between the project outline drawn up in September, the framework note finalised two months later, and the launch of the project with a plenary meeting in Paris at the beginning of February, time is very tight.

We chose to **start from a known ground** and to solicit teams with whom we have already had the opportunity to work, and more precisely on the SCCF side with facilitators with whom Pascale or I have already had the opportunity to collaborate: **inter-knowledge and trust are the bases on which we can rely.**

These are **people who carry the desired facilitation posture**, with all the humility that this requires: carrying the project, creating the conditions for it, accompanying the emergence while remaining in the background. We ask them to accompany a delicate subject: the life experience of people experiencing poverty, the impact of poverty on their lives and their bodies.

We are relying on these three people to take on board the people in difficulty who will be able to subscribe to this proposal. For my part, I ask Anne de Bourgogne to join Jean-Yves: we have spent a year together at the heart of the health crisis. Pascale, who contributed to the international research for France, meets Kaala, Martine, Saké and Aissata.

Agree to embark on the adventure:

- Anne, Anita, Jean-Yves from the Burgundy SCCF delegation;
- Anne, Emilia, Gérard, Saadia, Florence from the Rhône SCCF delegation;
- Kaala, Martine, Seka, Aissata, Adrien from the SCCF branch of Cedre, a self-help centre for exiled people;
- Françoise and Sylvie from ATD Auxerre;
- Olivier, Edith, Gérard and Myriam from ATD Beauvais ;
- Alice, Marie-Jo, Véréna and Murielle from ATD Rennes.

It is important to us that Cedar is involved in this project, partly because the Chapter has been part of the international research on the dimensions of poverty, and partly because we feel it is important that exiled people are represented in this work.

2. Forming a group, forming a team (how to form a group when the teams are scattered over the territory?)

This leads to different group dynamics, different ways of knowing each other, different issues and objectives, and therefore to think of intervention methods adapted to these different spaces.

- **The^{ère} Copil team**, people who are working together for the first time, from two organisations that have a common goal: the fight against poverty and a strong pedagogical identity: the

crossroads of knowledge and the pedagogy of the encounter, crossed since 2016 with the approach of developing the power to act.

The Copil is regularly reinforced by exchanges with Thomas L. and Agnès B. Thomas L.'s presence will become more important over time.

The co-chair is responsible for the development and implementation of all stages of the project.

- **The local team**, made up of a support worker and 2 or 3 people experiencing poverty, It will develop and acquire new knowledge based on the experiences of people experiencing poverty;
- **The group of people experiencing poverty**, made up of people spread over the French territory, Its mission is to produce collective knowledge to be shared with INSEE staff;
- **The group of accompanying persons**
They will intervene individually in the local teams and collectively in the plenary meetings;
- **The group of all the people involved in this project**: members of the copil, companions, people in precarious situations, Thomas L. and Agnès B..

Our focus from the outset of the project will be on enabling people to meet each other, to get to know each other and to see that their local team is part of a bigger whole.

Specific times for accompanying persons are proposed (only 1^{er} took place, the others were cancelled due to unavailability in the diaries)

3. The proposed framework (how to enable each group to engage with the proposed work taking into account their life realities)

We are planning 3 plenary meetings in Paris, which will mark the highlights of the programme:

- 05 Feb: launch day: get to know the project's stakeholders; discover the participatory research that led to the definition of the 8 dimensions + 2 cross-cutting experiments; presentation of INSEE and its missions;
- 1^{er} April: progress day: meet up, report on the work of the groups that have made it possible to appropriate the 8 dimensions + 2 cross-cutting experiences; find out about INSEE's measures of poverty and the questions that arise; try to define together the areas of work for the future;
- 23 June: preparation day: meet; share the groups' productions on the characteristics of the selected dimensions, "isolation" and "institutional abuse"; prepare the presentations for the meeting with INSEE staff the following day.

Between each plenary session, the accompanying persons receive instructions on the work to be carried out in the local teams.

Phase 1:

- Aim: to build a common base of knowledge and benchmarks to define poverty
- Methods: start from people's experiences to look at poverty and its impacts from their point of view; then discover the 8 dimensions + 2 cross-cutting experiences, always by linking them to the participants' experiences

Phase 2:

- Aim: to cross-reference the characteristics of the selected dimensions "isolation" and "institutional abuse" with the INSEE questionnaires associated with these dimensions in order to identify commonalities, divergences, or "holes in the picture".

- Modalities: divide the workload: 3 teams work on "institutional abuse" and 3 teams work on the "isolation" dimension; cross-reference the characteristics of the dimensions with people's experiences, complete or amend them; study the questions and try to find the characteristics in them; develop additional questions if necessary.

4. How to transmit knowledge developed over time in a few weeks

People experiencing poverty often have a daily life full of stress and unforeseen events: "convocation" appointments at the prefecture, "at the social worker's office"; the moonlighting employer who calls the day before for the next day and the impossibility of refusing for fear of losing this source of income; the landlady against service menus who forces people to go out... or sometimes Martine who has resumed her studies and has to go to her courses at the university...

Also, not everyone is at ease with working time: sitting for a long time, thinking about a specific and completely new subject, the relationship with the written word, etc.

Supporters and team members must deal with these unforeseen events, these realities and must know how to adjust, postpone, meet in the evening, on Saturday morning, help each other...

What we are asking them to do is ambitious: to appropriate the fruits of a participatory research project that lasted three years. Ambitious in terms of appropriating new knowledge, but also ambitious because to do so we are going to ask people to call on their experiences, which are not always easy to express. The subjects on which they are invited to express themselves are those of social or emotional isolation, social and institutional abuse, fears and suffering, relationships of dependence... Subjects that we professionals and volunteers do not approach with ease or simplicity.

For the working times in the local teams, we have to take into account this need for flexibility in our proposals. As a result, we imagine :

- Working times of up to 2 hours,
- On average every 15 days,
- In a dynamic and interactive way,
- With note-taking by the accompanying persons.

From this point onwards, the groups organise their working rhythm as they wish.

5. The place of INSEE (how to create the conditions for a real dialogue on 24 June)

In the construction of the project

This project was made possible thanks to the initiative of Thomas, director of statistical projects on the analysis of poverty, accompanied by Agnès, an analyst and developer.

They are our two interlocutors, with whom we discuss and co-construct the contents of the plenary sessions; we explain to them the work times proposed to the local teams (they even play the game of doing the work requested on the silhouettes: the impact of poverty on and in my body).

Thomas L. and Agnès B. help us to understand their issues from the point of view of statistics, a complex, highly technical profession where "changing the wording of a question is not easy".

He and she also shared with us their issues in relation to their institution: although their director supported this experiment, it was not unanimously supported by the organisation.

At that point we understand that a relationship of trust has been established.

It is with Agnès B. and Thomas L. that an enlarged co-pilot is formed, who together make decisions on the main orientations (e.g. the two dimensions chosen for phase 2 were agreed on the basis of the feedback from the groups, but also of what made sense to INSEE, with regard to the existing questionnaires, which could be linked to one or other dimension)

In the meetings

Agnès B. and Thomas L. join us at the lunch break of the 1^{ère} plenary day in Paris and all day of the 2^{nde} plenary.

Thus he or she takes part in the life of the group, the participants get to know them from the start of the programme, can discuss with them during the breaks... he or she is part of the "big group".

Thomas L. and Agnès B. spoke during these plenary sessions, first to present INSEE and what INSEE measures in the daily lives of the French. Then to present the ways of measuring poverty: monetary poverty and poverty in living conditions.

Without us having to ask, he and she chose participatory methods of intervention, which included the people present. Anita was delighted to be rich for an activity to understand median income (everyone was given a piece of paper with a sum written on it).

These teaching methods and the informal times encouraged the creation of a link between the members of the group and the two INSEE representatives. This link makes it possible to deconstruct the representations that one might have of an institution and the people who work there, and to begin to create the conditions for dialogue for the meeting on 24 June.

6. Preparing for the dialogue (how to create the conditions for a real dialogue on 24 June): 23 June

The morning is dedicated to the groups' feedback on the characteristics of the dimensions selected, creating a shared knowledge...

In the afternoon, 3 groups were formed to prepare the presentations for the following day:

- A presentation of the road travelled
- A presentation of the characteristics of isolation, which will be combined with a presentation by INSEE on the same theme to introduce a working session in small groups made up of people in precarious situations and INSEE staff,
- A presentation of the characteristics of institutional abuse, which will be combined with a presentation by INSEE on the same theme to introduce a working session in small groups made up of people in precarious situations and INSEE staff,

We end the day on the riverboats!

This is not anecdotal. These people came to Paris three times, always to meet in work spaces before going straight home.

But it is thanks to them that we are able to understand poverty better and perhaps one day measure it even better. That said, nothing is changing in their hard lives at the moment.

The fly boats are the minimum we can offer them (a future plea is the question of how to compensate these people for their time and work).

7. The day of 24 June (what happened, in the end?)

People who are proud to present the path they have taken in a few months, what they have learned about themselves and their teammates;

People who were able to take ownership of the results of participatory research and bring another point of view to bear;

People who know how to talk about their experiences in front of INSEE staff, on INSEE premises (!)

An attentive, curious audience, eager to better understand poverty and the audience it addresses;
2 universes which meet for the 1^{ère} time and which know how to talk to each other, ask precise questions and answer them, despite all the complexity of the universe of statistics and that of the 8 dimensions

8. The pitfalls and questions...

A pace imposed, particularly on carers and people experiencing poverty, due to the early start of the programme in relation to everyone's diaries;

Ensuring that time is made available for employed carers (not an 'extra' job)

The posture of some accompanying persons did not correspond to the prerequisites: the choice of accompanying persons (to give up...or not, but at what price?)

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Annex

What people have experienced: presentation prepared by Anita from Auxerre and Emilia from Rhône for their two-voice presentation of the path they have taken to the INSEE staff

Once upon a time, a facilitator suggested that I work on poverty with INSEE.

I said yes because I find it unacceptable that there is still poverty today.

We had a meeting in our small group to get to know each other and to explain the project.

Then we came to Paris for a day on February 5th where we met the other groups, we are 6 groups in all.

We did an exercise with post-its so that everyone could say one word about what poverty is for them and we put up our post-its to start to see what poverty is for the group.

We watched a video that presented research on the dimensions of poverty.

Thomas and Agnès introduced us to INSEE.

Then we went back to our groups.

We remembered what we did in February in Paris and then we made a silhouette to say more precisely what poverty represents for us, what it does in our bodies, with our words, from our own history, our life experience. We started from our personal stories to build a collective knowledge.

Some groups worked not with a silhouette but with a coat of arms.

Then we worked on the dimensions that emerged from the research.

It helped us to define a clearer vision of poverty for ourselves, even though we know it, we hadn't identified it like that.

We recognised ourselves in the different dimensions. We had real-life examples for each of the dimensions.

Then we worked on the links between the different dimensions.

We put threads of wool to link the different dimensions and these threads of wool were based on our experiences, on our life.

We have seen that everything is linked

Then we worked on an upward spiral to identify what helps us to get out of all those ties that can drag us down and identify the elements that put us in an upward spiral and out of poverty.

Then all the groups met in Paris at the Cedar on 1^{er} April.

We shared our work, we pooled it.

Thomas and Agnès introduced us to income poverty and the poverty line and to poverty in living conditions.

Then, with stickers, we started to choose the dimensions that we thought were most important to explore.

It was snowing and cold.

We went back to our groups and met three more times to work more specifically on the dimension of isolation.

3 groups worked on isolation and 3 groups on institutional abuse.

Still based on our experiences, we named characteristics of isolation and institutional abuse.

We also looked at the INSEE questionnaires on these subjects to see if we could find what we were looking for or what we would like to complete.

All the groups met yesterday to pool our work and to prepare for today's meeting.

We come away happy from the encounters we have had with the feeling that we have understood something about poverty and want to share it with you.

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