The *AccèsLogis Québec* Program: 15 years of Partnership between the State and the Social Economy

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Abstract

Over the past 15 years, the Quebec government's public policy on social and community housing has been based mainly on the AccèsLogis program. Under this program, some 23,000 new social housing units have been developed. While the program's regulations and funding are governed by the public sector (primarily provincial, secondarily federal), its development and implementation rely heavily on the participation of social and solidarity economy (SSE) stakeholders, and particularly on the input of housing Non Profit Organizations (NPOs) and co-operatives. In other words, SSE stakeholders play a significant role in program implementation (co-production) and in its definition and design (co-construction), to use a distinction favoured in this paper's conceptual framework (Vaillancourt, 2009).

This appraisal of the AccèsLogis program is based on research that was mostly done in partnerships since 1995. Our paper is divided into two parts: first, we present the context in which the AccèsLogis program emerged, along with its main characteristics; then we show that the program represents a social innovation in which SSE stakeholders make a major contribution while participating not only in the implementation of the program (co-production), but also in defining its architecture (co-construction).

Résumé

En matière d'habitation sociale et communautaire, la politique publique du gouvernement du Québec, au cours des quinze dernières années, s'est principalement appuyée sur le programme AccèsLogis. Ce programme, conçu en 1996 et lancé en 1997, a permis de développer près de 23 000 nouvelles unités de logement social. Même si la régulation et le financement du programme relèvent du secteur public (principalement provincial et secondairement fédéral), son développement et sa mise en œuvre misent fortement sur la participation des acteurs de l'économie sociale et solidaire (ESS), notamment sur l'apport des OSBL et des coopératives d'habitation. En d'autres termes, les acteurs de l'ESS assument un rôle important non seulement sur le plan de la mise en oeuvre (co-production) du programme, mais aussi sur le plan de sa définition et de son orientation (co-construction), pour reprendre une distinction que nous privilégions dans notre cadre conceptuel (Vaillancourt, 2009).

En nous appuyant sur des résultats de recherches, le plus souvent partenariales, menées depuis 1995, nous présentons un bilan du programme AccèsLogis. Nous le faisons en mettant en lumière la contribution de l'ESS et les relations partenariales qui se sont instaurées entre l'ESS et le secteur public. Il en ressort un portrait globalement positif, mais non exempt de quelques zones d'ombre. La structure de notre texte repose sur deux grandes parties. Dans une première

partie, sur un registre plutôt descriptif, nous présentons le contexte d'émergence du programme AccèsLogis et ses principales caractéristiques. Dans une deuxième partie, sur un registre plus analytique, nous faisons ressortir comment le programme AccèsLogis constitue une innovation sociale dans laquelle les acteurs de l'ESS font un apport majeur en participant non seulement à la mise en application du programme (co-production), mais aussi à la définition de son architecture (co-construction).

Introduction

Over the past 15 years, we have often used the case of social housing in Quebec to illustrate our conceptual framework and political vision on the possible contributions of the third sector – the social and solidarity economy (SSE) – to the democratization and enhancement of social and public policy (Ducharme & Vaillancourt, 2005; Ducharme, Vaillancourt & Lalonde, 2003; Vaillancourt, 2009, 2011; Vaillancourt & Ducharme, 2001;). More recently, we used the case of social housing policy again to explain our distinction between two forms of participation by the SSE in the development of public policy.

In its first form, which we call co-production, the participation of the SSE occurs when policies are implemented and reside on an organizational level. In its second form, which we call co-construction, SSE is seen in the development stage of policy making and exists on the institutional level (Jetté & Vaillancourt, 2011; Vaillancourt, 2009, 2011,2012). In making this distinction, we seek not to oppose the two forms of participation, but rather, to combine them. Indeed, we postulate that the most promising scenarios for innovative public policy reforms involve institutional arrangements in which SSE stakeholders and public authorities, without excluding private sector players, build partnerships which colour not only the way in which public policy is applied, but also its content and evolution. We postulate that public policies either co-constructed or co-produced with strong SSE participation can prove to be more inclusive and democratic for sharing resources, powers, and citizenship.

To highlight the analytical and practical utility of the distinction between co-construction and co-production of public policy, it is helpful to examine the evolution of Quebec's social housing policy over the past two decades. Our paper will take stock of the contribution of the social and solidarity economy to the *AccèsLogis*. In Part I, we outline the *AccèsLogis Québec* program. In Part II, we highlight how the *AccèsLogis* program represents a social innovation in which SSE stakeholders make a major contribution by participating not only in the implementation of the program (co-production), but also in defining its architecture (co-construction).

Outline of the *AccèsLogis* Program

We emphasize the role of SSE and public sector players because the collaboration between those stakeholders largely contributed to shaping the program's originality and effectiveness. But highlighting this close co-operation between the social and public economies in no way means the private sector and the market economy did not play a significant role in this program. On the contrary, SSE and public sector players have constantly had to negotiate with the competitive logic and private sector stakeholders, for purchasing building lots, for instance, or having buildings constructed or renovated, and so on. Thus, the 15 years of the *AccèsLogis* program can be likened to a story of a plural economy and hybridization (Boyer, 1998). But in this plural, hybridized economy, the competitive logic of the private sector does not disappear, but rather, is

tempered by the presence of the values of equity and redistribution specific to the public economy and of solidarity and reciprocity specific to the SSE. To understand this form of hybridization, it is important to clearly define the contribution of stakeholders from the SSE and the public sector.

Context of Emergence of the *AccèsLogis* Program
Paradoxically, during the 1990s in Canada, and Quebec in particular, there were both unfavourable and favourable factors that defined the *AccèsLogis* program. After the Canadian Liberal Party returned to power in 1993, with Jean Chrétien as Prime Minister and Paul Martin as Minister of Finance, the federal government launched a neoliberal program aimed at ensuring healthier public finances by simultaneously slashing unemployment insurance, social transfers to the provinces, and social housing (Vaillancourt, Aubry, Kearney, Thériault, Tremblay, 2004; Vaillancourt & Ducharme, 2001). From 1993 onward, the federal government completely froze its financial participation in the development of new provincial community housing programs; however, Quebec and British Columbia were exceptions and continued to develop new programs in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Dansereau, 2005; Hulchanski, 2002, 2005; Irwin, 2004).

In Quebec, under the leadership of Jacques Parizeau from 1994 to 1995 and Lucien Bouchard from 1996 to 2000, economic and social development under the Parti Québécois (PQ) government became known for a series of new public policies, where some are conservative, indeed neoliberal, and others are innovative and progressive. The plural, and even contradictory, nature of the social and economic policies propelled by the PQ government during that period stands out especially when one looks at what happened and the time before, during, and after the fall 1996 Summit on the Economy and Employment. In itself, this Summit constituted a social and political innovation. Among the participants, civil society players, including those from the social economy and the community movement, attended with business and labour union stakeholders and alongside elected representatives (Vaillancourt, 2010, forthcoming 2012).

The 1996 Summit fostered the next generation of policy development, lasting 15 years. Some of these policies were more conservative, including one that imposed a zero deficit within four years by building primarily on an improvised plan for spending cutbacks, particularly on the health care, social services, and education fronts. Furthermore, largely owing to the social struggles that had led up to and prepared it in the preceding years, the 1996 Summit led to the emergence of a plethora of progressive, innovative new public policies. Among these were the recognition of the social economy as an extension of the recognition of community action, regional and local development policy with the creation of a network of local development centres, family social policy with the goal of creating a virtually universal network of child care centres offering places at $5 a day for children from birth to 5 years old, the decision to create a network of domestic help social economy enterprises, and the decision to develop the *AccèsLogis Québec* program and create the Quebec community housing fund (*Fonds québécois d'habitation communautaire*, or FQHC) (Ducharme & Vaillancourt, 2005; Vaillancourt 2009).

The Three Components of the *AccèsLogis* Program
Conceived at the 1996 Summit, the *AccèsLogis* program was launched in 1997 for a five-year period (1997-2001). It was subsequently prolonged several times, thereby attaining a certain durability. The index of Quebec government programs announced the *AccèsLogis* program as follows: "*AccèsLogis Québec* is a financial aid program, which encourages pooling of public, community and private resources to produce social and community housing for low- and

moderate-income households and for people with special housing needs" (Government of Quebec, 2011).

The program is divided into three components: Component 1 is aimed at low- and moderate-income households (families, independent seniors) and provides permanent dwellings; Component 2 is geared toward projects to create permanent dwellings with services for seniors with slightly diminishing independence; Component 3 focused on projects for temporary, transitional or permanent dwellings with services for people with special housing needs, such as: permanent or transitional dwellings for people wishing to reintegrate society and live independently, emergency shelters, etc. Organizations interested in submitting projects are strongly encouraged to call upon the expertise of a technical resource group in the housing field or a non-profit purchasing corporation recognized by the *Société d'habitation du Québec* (SHQ).

Funding of Projects Carried out under *AccèsLogis*
During Phase I of *AccèsLogis* (1997-2001), the government part of the financing was paid solely by the Quebec government. Since 2002, with the signing of a new Affordable Housing Framework Agreement with the federal government, the program has received part of its funding from the federal government. It is therefore possible to talk of federal joint funding, although such funding remains marginal, since the Quebec government's participation is far greater (SHQ, 2009).[1] Project funding comes from three sources: (1) an SHQ grant representing up to 60% of the total amount, (2) a local contribution (municipalities, communities) representing at least 15% of the total, and (3) a guaranteed mortgage loan corresponding to 30% to 40% of the project cost. The mortgage, amortized over 35 years, is repaid from the rent paid by tenants. Part of the mortgage is reinvested in the *Fonds québécois de développement communautaire*, an aspect that will be revisited later in this paper.

Figure 1 shows the actual breakdown of funds invested for housing units completed or being built between 2002 and 2010 (Phase II of *AccèsLogis*). The government share (mainly provincial, but also federal) corresponds to the *AccèsLogis* grant. Depending on the program component, between 20% and 100% of tenants are eligible for a subsidy from the Rent Supplement Program, aimed at ensuring that the cost of renting corresponds to 25% or less of tenants' gross income.

Figure 1: Breakdown of *AccèsLogis* funding sources (2002-2010)
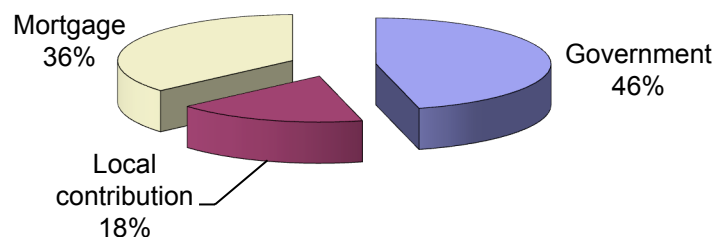
Source: *Société d'habitation du Québec*, *Direction de la planification et développement* (Planning and Development Branch), 2010.

[1] According to the SHQ officials questioned, the federal contribution averages barely more than 20%.

Number of housing units completed or being built (1997–2010)
As Table 1 shows, from 1997 to 2010, some 17,470 housing units have been built under the *AccèsLogis* program, and 5,231 new units are under construction, for a total of 22,701 units.

Table 1: Housing units built under *AccèsLogis* (1997 to 2010)

Housing units built under Phase 1 (1997-2002)	6,200
Housing units built under Phase 2 (2002-2010)	11,270
Housing units under construction	5,231
Total	**22,701**

Source: *Société d'habitation du Québec*, *Direction de la planification et développement* (Planning and Development Branch), 2010.

Table 2 shows that to date, the program has been used primarily by housing NPOs (67%), then housing co-operatives (27%), and to a lesser extent by municipal housing bureaus (6%). The fact that housing bureaus came onto the scene later and the largest municipalities' decision (including Montreal) to opt for another affordable housing development program (*Logement abordable Québec*) partly explain the modest place held by social housing units developed by municipal housing bureaus in the *AccèsLogis* record.

Table 2: Breakdown of *AccèsLogis* units by component and tenure from 1997 to 2010

	No. of projects	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	No. of units
NPOs	67%	39%	92%	96%	68%
Co-ops	27%	51%	5%	1%	26%
Municipal housing bureaus (public)	6%	10%	3%	4%	6%
Total	**100%**	**48%**	**32%**	**20%**	**100%**

Source: François Vermette, *Réseau québécois des OSBL d'habitation*, based on data from the *Société d'habitation du Québec.*

This section highlights the strong participation of SSE stakeholders in the implementation of the *AccèsLogis* program. From this conceptual framework it is possible to conclude that the SSE participates in the co-production of public policy, since 94% of the 22,701 new social housing units built or being developed over the past 15 years are managed by housing NPOs and co-operatives. Furthermore, these units are developed with the assistance of technical resource groups, non-profit organizations whose basic operations are supported by the SHQ. However, it is not through these data alone that we can determine whether SSE stakeholders have participated in the co-construction of *AccèsLogis*, but also through an appraisal of the system itself.

Social and Solidarity Economy Participation in Co-construction of Policy

In this second part of our article, we provide an appraisal of the *AccèsLogis* program, paying special attention to the contribution of social and solidarity economy (SSE) stakeholders and bearing in mind the aforementioned distinction between co-production and participation in the

co-construction of policy. From the data provided in Part I, it is already clear that SSE players participate heavily in implementation of the *AccèsLogis* program, which by extension means that SSE participates in the co-production of public policy. While it is also true that SSE also participates, alongside other representatives of the state and civil society, in the co-construction of public policy, before we document this, we will first briefly examine why the differentiation between co-production and co-construction is be useful.

Co-production and Co-construction of Policy
The distinction between co-production and co-construction is essential because the mere participation of the SSE in the implementation of public policy (i.e., co-production) does not guarantee of the democratic quality and relevance of that policy. In our recent theoretical and empirical work on co-production and co-construction, we have highlighted that the SSE's contribution to the enhancement and democratization of public policy builds on the configurations in which the SSE participates in both the co-production and the co-construction of policy (Vaillancourt, 2009, 2011, 2012). Conversely, our case studies have underscored the fact that in scenarios where the SSE participates only in the co-production of public policy and not its co-construction, the policy is awkward and inadequate, particularly with regard to the quality of services. For instance, in past research on home care services policy, we have demonstrated that SSE stakeholders, notably domestic help social economy enterprises and their associations, were heavily involved in co-production of public policy without being significantly included in its co-construction (Jetté & Vaillancourt, 2011; Vaillancourt, 2012). This lack of co-construction in home care services has occurred because over the past few years the responsible Quebec authorities and their regional representatives have often insisted on determining the rules of the policy game themselves, avoiding involvement or consultations with the civil society stakeholders concerned with the decision-making process.

Bearing in mind our concept of policy co-construction, we will look at certain factors that help grasp more clearly the social innovations fostered by the participation of the SSE in *AccèsLogis* policy. Among these are the role of the Quebec community housing fund (*Fonds québécois d'habitation communautaire*, or FQHC), the mechanism for autonomous refinancing of community housing by means of contributions to the FQHC by projects developed in *AccèsLogis*, the participation of local and municipal stakeholders in project funding, the culture of productive partnerships with community organizations offering services, and the effects of contamination of community housing practices on the public sector. After looking at these factors, we will say a word about the specific features of *AccèsLogis* compared with other similar initiatives developed in the rest of Canada.

Fonds québécois d'habitation communautaire, Site and Symbol of Co-construction
Broadly stated, the *AccèsLogis* program, in line with its forerunner, the *Programme achat-rénovation pour coops et OSBL* (PARCO) – a purchase and renovation program for Co-ops and NPOs – stemmed from a proposal from certain SSE housing players in the mid-1990s, at a time when the development of social housing was slow and management of the SHQ was attached to the "importance and role that community groups could have" (Ducharme & Vaillancourt, 2005, p. 116). Subsequently, from 1997 onward, it was within the *Fonds québécois d'habitation communautaire* (FQHC) that the shape of the program would be defined jointly with public sector and SSE stakeholders. The FQHC, like *AccèsLogis*, was established in 1997 from an initiative of the Quebec government as a non-profit organization in the wake of the Summit on

the Economy and Employment. Its mission was to promote the construction and maintenance of quality community housing at affordable prices. Its board of directors comprised representatives from municipal, financial, community, and government circles. The distinguishing feature of the FQHC was that representatives from the community and the social economy represented the majority of stakeholders (Bouchard & Hudon, 2008; Dansereau, 2005; Ducharme & Vaillancourt, 2005; Vaillancourt, 2009).

The FQHC therefore became a forum for meeting, deliberating, and arbitrating between leaders from the social economy and the public sector involved in the development of social housing. It was interested in numerous questions associated with the design (co-construction) and delivery (co-production) of assistance programs for constructing social and community dwellings. It also acted as an advisory committee to government authorities on issues associated with these questions. The first years of the Fund were particularly telling for the development and enhancement of the *AccèsLogis* program. Even from its inception, the Fund participated in "very close co-operation" and in partnership with the SHQ, in the development of the program's directions and parameters. Over the years, the FQHC became an innovative institution that symbolized and fostered the participation of SSE stakeholders in the co-construction of public policy with respect to social housing in Quebec. Its form of hybrid governance incarnated the Quebec state's openness to working with the people and organizations that form the backbone of civil society (Ducharme & Vaillancourt, 2005). Now, early in the 2010s, the Fund has to invest itself in delicate debates concerning its own future, in particular on its role in the follow-up on and refinancing of *AccèsLogis* projects (Vermette, 2011). This last issue will be revisited later in this article.

An Original Mechanism for Refinancing Community Housing

When *AccèsLogis* was implemented, social economy stakeholders – in particular the *Fédération québécoise des coopératives d'habitation* (FQCH) and the *Association des GRT du Québec* (AGRTQ) [2] – proposed a mechanism for autonomous refinancing for community housing whereby projects developed under *AccèsLogis* required payment to the FQHC after 10 years of operation. This payment corresponded to the equivalent of the capital paid during the first 10 years of the first mortgage (amortized over 25 years) (Morin, Richard & Cuierrier, 2008). These amounts were then brought together in the form of funds and used to develop, expand, or renovate the buildings of organizations benefiting from *AccèsLogis* that had contributed to the Fund. According to some calculations, the FQHC could potentially be collecting between $120 million and $220 million by 2017 (Bouchard & Gaudreault, 2008; FQHC, 2011).

At the end of the 10-year term, differences of opinion and tensions appeared among the members of the FQHC when questions were raised about management and accountability concerning these sums. These debates underscored the strong hybrid nature of the refinancing formula. In fact, since a largely non-government source was involved (the mortgage was mainly shouldered by tenants), but was well governed by regulations under a public program, the questions to be clarified were as follows: who should supervise, co-ordinate, evaluate, and assign the sums? To whom and how should these amounts be assigned? The coming years will be used to resolve these questions. Despite the tensions which arose in the current debates, the fact remains that over the past 15 years, the FQHC has been invaluable, without which SSE stakeholders would not have been able to work, in partnership with public sector players, to co-

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[2] The creation of a Quebec federation of housing NPOs—*Fédération québécoise des OSBL d'habitation*—took place later (in 2000), so its representatives were less present.

construct the evolving architecture of the *AccèsLogis* program and other institutional arrangements conducive to the enhancement of Quebec housing policy.

Participation of Local Stakeholders in Project Funding and Development

The financing standards for completion of *AccèsLogis* projects provide, in addition to federal and provincial funding, a local community contribution. This contribution has been set at 15% of overall project construction costs.[3] In most cases, it comes from municipalities[4] (in the form of funds, tax exemptions, sale of land at below-market cost, etc). It can also come from local stakeholders through fundraising, gifts from foundations and health care institutions, for instance. In fact, while municipalities' financial participation is nothing new, higher construction costs are forcing project promoters to seek new forms of participation from local stakeholders and to diversify funding sources. Thus, the "local" component of financing can become the opportunity for "bundling" more original projects, incorporating, for instance, a supply of health services, environmental protection, a contribution to local revitalization. From SSE players' viewpoint, this contribution revealed the vitality of local stakeholders and of the political and local will at work. In this sense, the local contribution often fostered a form of governance that encourages local communities to participate and to favour housing projects rooted in the local social and heritage fabric.

The necessary participation of the local community nevertheless contains a downside: an unequal distribution of resources, particularly between municipalities (often the smallest ones) not participating in regional social housing funds and where the authorities show no interest in social housing. This means that in certain geographical areas where municipal authorities are not attuned to community housing development needs and are interested only in upmarket real estate projects that bring them higher tax revenues, the *AccèsLogis* arrangement is underused, if indeed it is used at all. To address this problem, a government consultation allowed stakeholders from municipalities and the social economy to reaffirm that while they remain in agreement with the principle of a portion of financing coming from the community, "the financing of social housing is first a responsibility of the provincial government, and financing should not come from property taxes" (CMM, 2009, p. 8; FQHC, 2009). Hence the importance in the *AccèsLogis* policy of the major share of public funding coming from the provincial government and the guarantee provided by the SHQ for obtaining mortgages.

A Tradition of Productive Partnerships with Community Stakeholders

Under Components 2 (seniors) and 3 (special needs) of *AccèsLogis* it is stated: "at the project design and definition stage, organizations have to be associated with representatives of local, community or institutional organizations for (…) the supply of services" (SHQ, 2008). Through these two components out of a total of three, the *AccèsLogis* program has behaved like public policy, contributed to broadening and solidifying innovative social housing practices with services and community support in all Quebec regions. In fact, since the 1980s in certain regions these practices already been developed and implemented. They have made it possible for socially and economically vulnerable individuals to stay in their own homes, whereas in an earlier age those individuals would have been confined to residential facilities or institutionalized (Jetté, Thériault, Réjean & Vaillancourt, 1998). The advent of the *AccèsLogis* program conferred

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[3] In fact, local stakeholders' contribution has often accounted for more than 25% of total project costs.

[4] Since 2002, the statute governing municipalities requires medium-sized and large municipalities to put in place a "social housing development fund," essentially earmarked for funding the local contribution.

additional legitimacy and institutional support on these innovative practices, encouraging their expansion.

One of the advantages of the community housing formula, as compared, for instance, to public or private housing complexes, is its democratic governance and numerous affiliations with local communities, giving community housing access to numerous resources (volunteers, institutional support) (Vaillancourt & Charpentier, 2005). While the community housing formula goes beyond mere social housing projects developed with *AccèsLogis*, the state recognition in 2007 of community support in social housing practices is another advance initiated by housing NPOs (Ducharme & Roy, 2009; MSSS & SHQ, 2007). Community support in social housing builds on support from tenants' role vis-à-vis more isolated or vulnerable individuals. It is often said that these practices are typically post-Fordist and go beyond the boundaries of "neo-welfarist" social policies by offering an alternative to earlier residential forms associated with institutionalization (Dumais & Ducharme, 2008).

Despite efforts to structure more effectively the forms of community housing with services in *AccèsLogis*, the majority of projects stem from an often fragile series of formal or informal agreements or voluntary undertakings concerning financial contributions from tenants. Furthermore, the development of these projects led to the creation of many precarious jobs and contracts, notably in the housing NPO sector (Binhas & Ducharme, 2010; Ducharme & Dumais, 2007). In short, funding for this initiative still remains modest and fragile, even though the housing projects with services carried out under *AccèsLogis* are a fertile laboratory for innovations of all kinds, and the funding challenge for these products was somewhat alleviated by the 2007 policy on community support in social housing, achieved through the efforts of SSE stakeholders and their allies in the public sector and social movements since the 1990s. Consequently, daily tinkering and resourcefulness remain necessary in order to pull these projects back from the brink.

Contagion Effect of Community Housing Values on the Public Sector

The *AccèsLogis* program was initially reserved exclusively for projects for which SSE stakeholders were responsible. The new housing units developed under the program could only be housing co-operatives and NPOs. But, starting in 2002, the government authorities opened up the possibility to municipal housing bureaus managing public low-income housing to also develop housing projects under the *AccèsLogis* program.

The net effect of this new distribution is that municipal housing bureaus are now developing projects whose parameters have been heavily influenced by the values of participation (of users, staff, and local communities) and democratic governance dear to the ESS sector. In other words, the Quebec government's regulation at work in *AccèsLogis* fosters the dissemination of SSE principles to the public sector (low-income housing) and, ultimately, the private sector. This leads, for instance, to tenant participation practices whose contamination effect applies not only to *AccèsLogis* projects developed in municipal housing bureaus, but also to all existing public low-income housing projects. In fact, since 2002, the legislation concerning the SHQ stipulates that low-income housing projects must have two tenants on their boards of directors. The new law also provides for the establishment of tenants' committees. In short, the *AccèsLogis* program that started in the late 1990s with a social housing experiment under the social economy and bolstered by support mechanisms for tenant participation, was eventually exported in the 2000s by the Quebec legislature to low-income housing – the public sector. Indeed, SSE principles and values, such as tenant participation in the democratic life of social

housing, were all exported to the public sector. This is the contagion effect described by Robert Boyer (1998) and Benoît Lévesque (2007).

Influence of the *AccèsLogis* Model on the Rest of Canada
As a conclusion to Part II of this article, it is fruitful to discuss the impact that the *AccèsLogis* program has had on public housing policy in the rest of Canada. Returning to the theme of this special issue, one may wonder whether the participation of the SSE in the co-production and co-construction of the *AccèsLogis* program "supports, challenges and innovates Canadian social policy." It is not our intention to suggest that Quebec has had a monopoly on innovative policies involving the contribution of the SSE to community housing in Canada. Over the past 15 years, at one time or another, other provincial and territorial governments have taken initiatives and developed programs, which to some extent, have resembled the initiatives and programs in Quebec (Pierre, 2007, pp. 14–16). But the difference between Quebec housing policies and those found in other provinces, such as British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario, is that in Quebec housing policies such as *AccèsLogis* have had a structuring effect and have been sustained over a 15-year period despite changes in government. With a 15-year history, the *AccèsLogis* program's long-term survival appears to have been virtually guaranteed. In other words, this program is not the public policy solely of the PQ government that launched it in 1997 or the Liberal government that extended it since 2003. Over time, it has become the public policy of a variety of governments and political parties. It has become a policy of the Quebec state and of a great variety of stakeholders, organizations, and social movements in Quebec society. It is because of this longstanding history that we can suggest that the *AccèsLogis* program, despite its limitations and fragilities, occupies a unique position among innovative housing policies, co-produced, and co-constructed with input from SSE stakeholders in Canada as a whole.

Nevertheless, despite its financial scope, originality, and the growing interest in it program from other quarters, the *AccèsLogis* program remains relatively unknown by observers of and stakeholders in social and community housing policy in the other provinces. In short, the dissemination of this experience remains too limited compared with what is happening in the field of family policy and daycare centres, where the Quebec case has become a recognized benchmark throughout North America. The issue here is not to impose the Quebec housing policy model (or other public policies nurtured by participation from the SSE) on the rest of Canada. Rather, it is to foster the dissemination and adaptation of the basic principles and the conditions that allow public policies, such as *AccèsLogis*, to become a "vector of innovation," as proposed in a recent collective work on the Quebec social economy experience (Bouchard, 2011).

Just as innovative social policy and social housing experiences from other Canadian provinces can stimulate Quebec ideas and projects, so can Quebec ideas and projects inspire new ideas and projects in other provinces, and indeed, even the federal government. In the meantime, the originality of the Quebec experience is likely to become isolated and weakened. However, it is possible, that if more civil society players – including SSE stakeholders – pressured their provincial and territorial governments to co-construct community housing policies and programs, then in turn, the federal government would be forced to amend its current policy of obstruction and cooperate with these provinces and territories by providing adequate joint funding for these new housing initiatives. In such a context, it would be especially beneficial to have more data comparing the configuration of public community housing policies between provinces, paying attention to the participation of the SSE.

Conclusion

Over the past 15 years SSE stakeholders have played a significant and original role in the co-production and the co-construction of the *AccèsLogis* program in particular, and the Quebec government's public policy on housing overall. The participation of SSE actors in the implementation or co-production of *AccèsLogis* policy emerges clearly, since housing NPOs and co-operatives are responsible for the construction and administration of approximately 95% of the housing projects and for the 22,701 social housing units developed or currently in development under the program since 1997.

SSE stakeholders' participation in the co-construction of *AccèsLogis* has also been substantial, contributing to several social innovations. In the field of community housing in Quebec, SSE players – housing NPOs and co-operatives, their regional and province-wide federations, their allies, including technical resource groups, FRAPRU, the *Chantier de l'économie sociale*, the *Conseil québécois de la coopération et de la mutualité* (CQCM), etc. – are not confined merely to a role of service providers and state subcontractors. These SSE organizations and their networks participated in the gestation of the architecture of the *AccèsLogis* program in the mid-1990s and in its development during the years 1997-2011. In conjunction with public sector actors (SHQ, municipalities, municipal housing bureaus, Ministry of Health and Social Services, etc.), the social economy has been associated at various times and in a variety of ways with the co-construction and re-construction of the benchmarks for the creation and evolution of *AccèsLogis*. In particular, the SSE has been implicated in the co-construction of policy directions concerning financing modes, the three program components, tenant participation in governance, the role of local communities, the program's openness to low-income housing projects, and so on. This is what Bouchard and Hudon (2008) explain this process as the "joint construction of public policy [...] fostered by the recognition of professional actors in the social economy sector, notably technical resource groups and federation professionals, conducive to connecting policies with the realities experienced in the field" (p. 220).

The positive impact of the SSE in the co-construction and co-production of *AccèsLogis* also emerges in the comparative study by Proulx, Bourque and Savard (2007) on the interfaces between the social economy and the state in eight cases of public policies in Quebec. In summarizing the type of relations that prevail in the case of social housing, the three researchers observe that this public policy leaves room for co-construction. While the role of the state in regulation and financing remains strong, SSE stakeholders enjoy considerable autonomy for promoting their mission, managing their organization, and influencing the shape of evaluation policies. In short, one of the reasons the *AccèsLogis* is successful is that that although the project receives provincial funding, it has to be anchored through at least 15% local financing – a stipulation that necessitates municipal and citizen involvement. This interaction between the commitment of the Quebec state and that of local communities is conducive to the pursuit of territorial equality in all Quebec regions, without leaving room for the perverse effects of standardization that are well-known in one-size-fits-all programs.

Our findings have shown that the after 15 years, the *AccèsLogis* program has been an innovative and structuring public policy, both for the SSE housing sector and for housing policy as a whole. The structuring aspect of *AccèsLogis* largely stems from its longevity. When it was launched, the program was to last five years. Subsequently, by dint of being renewed by various governments, it has become a policy of the Quebec state. Nonetheless, over the past few years,

the government's political will has flagged. This has been seen in the declining number of new housing units announced each year. In that context, some might be concerned at what Quebec's Minister of Finance meant when he recently announced his intention to "review the financial engineering of funding for social housing" (Quebec, 2011a).

In short, with a few other examples of innovative public policies, including one on early childhood day care services, the *AccèsLogis* program testifies to the ability of the Quebec state to enter into relations that are other than instrumental, that is, those that are truly partnership-based with SSE stakeholders. Nevertheless, despite its past successes, this program's future is not guaranteed. Whether *AccèsLogis* is maintained and remains dynamic in the years to come will depend not only on input from the SSE, but also on political will at all levels. This is especially true of the federal level – although the federal government started to reengage with federal housing programs in the 2000s after a withdrawal in 1993, its re-involvement has remained too half-hearted and unpredictable.

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