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Leaving the Child Welfare Services: From Institutional Housing to the Initial Steps on the Housing Market

In France, children under age 18 not raised in families are cared for by the child welfare services. Upon reaching 18, they must provide for themselves, but they face particularly difficult challenges in entering the job and housing markets. Based on statistical data and interviews, this article analyses the experiences and determinants of access to housing autonomy during this particular and often abrupt transition to adulthood, despite being programmed and accompanied by an extension contract.

In France, 138,000 children or adolescents considered in danger—1.6% of the population aged under 18—are placed in accommodation (ONED, 2015). They may be placed for several reasons, including the death of their parents, the inability of the latter to educate their children, difficult material conditions, family violence, and the separation from their family of foreign minors arriving in France alone (unaccompanied foreign minors[1]). While these individuals may enter the system at different ages (Frechon et al., 2017), they are all required to leave it at age 18, when the legal duty of care comes to an end, or at 21, if they qualify for an extension contract (*contrat jeune majeur*[2]). At this point, they must provide for themselves and can no longer depend on the child welfare services (*aide sociale à l'enfance*) for housing, whereas most people of their age continue to live with their parents (Galland, 2000; Van de Velde, 2008).[3] Young individuals leaving a shared residence face considerable housing

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(1) Also referred to as isolated foreign minors.

(2) The *contrat jeune majeur*, introduced in 1975, enables young people in the child welfare system to extend the assistance provided to them during their minority. The assistance may take several forms, including educational and psychological support, accommodation, and financial aid.

(3) More than half of 18- to 24-year-olds live with their parents, particularly those with difficulties integrating (Castell et al., 2016).

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problems, especially those from the lower classes, which is generally the case for the individuals in the child welfare system (Serre, 2010), and those lacking family support (Bugeja-Bloch, 2013; Muniglia, 2015). Research has highlighted the connection between childhood placement and housing insecurity, notably when leaving institutional care (Courtney et al., 2001; Mink Park et al., 2005; Firdion, 2006; Daining and Depanfilis, 2007; Firdion and Marpsat, 2014). In France in 2012, 23% of the users of aid services for homeless people born in France had been placed in a structure in their childhood, compared with just 2%–3% for the overall population (Frechon and Marpsat, 2016).

This article explores the residential trajectories of young people leaving the child welfare system. Housing situations depend on the local housing context and individuals' financial resources, but also on the choices they make relative to their personal histories, which shape their expectations and judgement (Grafmeyer, 2010). As such, the past and specific life events of young people need to be taken into account if we are to understand their position in the housing market. Since young people from the lower classes are more exposed to housing insecurity (Marpsat, 2009), it may be presumed that individuals having been taken care of by the child welfare services frequently encountered housing problems before their placement in the system. In addition, during the placement period, minors are often housed in numerous residences (Potin, 2012). One hypothesis, then, is that housing vulnerability (Bouillon et al., 2015) is a structural given in the trajectory of these young people. Furthermore, as budgetary restrictions increase,[4] the length of the care provided by the child welfare services is decreasing, with extension contracts increasingly difficult to obtain and granted for shorter periods. Some young people are forced to leave their institution even if they do not have a housing solution (Dulin, 2018). Work in urban sociology stresses the devastating effects of the loss of housing on the lives of individuals, leading to short- and medium-term insecurity for those evicted (Desmond, 2015; Aguilera et al., 2018; Deboulet and Lafaye, 2018). It appears that not just the loss of housing has an impact but also the threat of that loss. The end of the right to housing and the sense of legitimacy that comes from having a place of residence generate housing uncertainty that weakens individuals (Deboulet, 2006; Lelévrier, 2014). This raises questions on how the reduction of housing periods by the institution affects the experiences and life courses of young people in the child welfare system. We also know that expulsions have a different impact on different populations, with a greater impact on the most vulnerable (François, 2016; Deboulet and Lafaye, 2018). Concerning housing for people experiencing

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(4) As part of the drive to reduce public spending, particularly following the introduction in 2016 of the LOLF organic law on finance acts, assistance for young adults has become increasingly selective (Frechon and Marquet, 2018). A report from the Economic, Social, and Environmental Council of France highlights the reduction of the budgets of French *départements* and the attribution of *contrats jeune majeur* (Dulin, 2018). The situation is also related to the migration crisis involving assistance for a new population: unaccompanied foreign minors.

homelessness, a process of social selection when exiting the system has been identified, those with greater social assets coming out in a more advantageous position (Gardella, 2014; Lanzaro, 2014). Do similar inequalities exist among individuals leaving child welfare? The key here is understanding how these individuals succeed, or fail to succeed, in entering the housing market. What obstacles do they face in the rental market? For young people not accessing autonomous housing, what degree of continuity exists between the assistance provided by the child welfare services and the housing aid available to the adult population? Where young people do access a structure, what is the nature of that structure? According to one hypothesis, a process of 'skimming' (Damon, 2002) occurs when individuals leave the child welfare system, whereby the most socially integrated access the best structures.[5] More broadly, we will analyse under which conditions being taken care of by the child welfare services helps to secure housing trajectories and, in contrast, stands as a source of vulnerability.

To respond to these questions, we have drawn on the ELAP study on young people's access to independence (Box 1). After demonstrating that young people are largely exposed to social and housing difficulties before being taken under care, we analyse the effects of the programmed departure from the child welfare system on their experience of the institution and on their life courses. We then focus on how they establish a position in the housing market and secure their 'housing position'[6] for the present and the future.

While this article takes account of the institutional context forming the backdrop of the life courses of the interviewees, it approaches the experience of the child welfare services and the departure from the institution based on the perceptions of the individuals involved. The viewpoint of child welfare workers is thus not directly addressed.

I. Lower-class youth exposed to housing insecurity at an early age

The young people under the care of the child welfare services have several specific characteristics. First, most of them have migrant backgrounds. A quarter of the interviewees are former unaccompanied foreign minors, while those not belonging to this category often have parents born outside France (the case for 31% of their mothers and 29% of their fathers). Half of the interviewees have at least one parent born outside France (compared to 23% for the

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(5) The sector for housing-insecure people is a competitive and hierarchical segment providing contrasting accommodation conditions (Soulié, 1997; Damon, 2002; Gardella, 2014).

(6) A person's housing position is based on three components: the location of the housing unit, its material aspects (including size, number of rooms, building structure, and comfort), and the type of occupation (ownership, rental, accommodated free of charge, etc.) (Grafmeyer, 2010). It is also determined on the basis of residential choices shaped by previous experience.

Box 1. Overview of the ELAP study

The ELAP study[a] was conducted in two waves by INED's survey department in seven *départements*: Nord, Pas-de-Calais, Paris, Seine-et-Marne, Essonne, Seine-Saint-Denis, and Hauts-de-Seine. The first wave was administered in 2013 and 2014. A representative sample was constituted of all the young people in the selected *départements* aged 17–20 and placed in welfare housing (Frechon and Marquet, 2016). The interviewers collected the responses of 1,622 young people, or 75% of the individuals in the random sample. A second wave was carried out 18 months later on a subsample comprising two groups. Between the two waves, the interviewees were called on twice to maintain contact. The first group to be re-interviewed was composed of individuals aged 17 at the time of the first wave and between 18 and 19 during the second (*n* = 501, unweighted sample size): 304 were under care at the time, 51 were not under care but were receiving educational support, and 146 had fully exited the child protection system. The second group comprised young people aged between 19.5 and 20 during the first wave and who had thus reached the age of 21 (the age limit for child protection) at the time of the second wave (*n* = 255). They had thus been granted an extension contract (*contrat jeune majeur*) of at least 18 months (three of them were still under care at the time of the second wave, which is possible as an exception if individuals have yet to finish school). The scope of the study concerns the population having responded to the two waves of the survey and reporting that they were no longer in the child welfare system, i.e. those no longer dependent on the child welfare services either for housing or financial resources (or 398 individuals). Regarding those who did not respond to the survey, we know that many of them left the child welfare system at an early stage, generally to return to their family or set up a home with a partner (Frechon and Marquet, 2018). Their desire to move on from the child welfare system probably influenced their decision not to respond to the questionnaire. The weighting takes account in part of this shortfall (those having left the system without an extension contract were over-weighted).

Following the survey, a group of researchers from various disciplines[b] administered some 100 surveys with young people having accepted to pursue the research. The interviewees were selected to reflect diverse situations (in terms of sociodemographic characteristics, housing situation, and care course). The interview guides included a shared section for all researchers serving to extend the longitudinal observation of the young peoples' lives after placement. A second wave of interviews was conducted around 1 year later with the same individuals to follow their trajectories over an even longer period. For this article, the entire corpus of interviews is analysed, along with several representative cases of the various post-welfare housing situations.[c]

The population of young people is heterogeneous (Table 1). Boys outnumber girls (Table 2A), a result of the presence of unaccompanied foreign minors, who account for a quarter of the sample and as a majority are boys. Unaccompanied foreign minors are more present in the Paris region than in the *départements* of the Nord region.

overall 18–29 population in France, according to the Trajectories and Origins survey[7]). Most of these young people are also from the lower classes. The quantitative survey does not provide information on the occupation of the parents, but they appear to be low-educated, 35% of the mothers never attended school or stopped before middle school, 21% attended high school, and just 12% completed further education (Table 1). To put this into perspective, 46% of the women born in 1975 in France have completed further education (INSEE Labour Force Survey, 2002). Fathers' educational attainment is also low, but many of the interviewees do not possess this information as they have lost track of their fathers or never knew them. In a further distinguishing characteristic, many of these young people come from large families, which also indicates a lower-class background (Parizot et al., 2004). Thirty-nine per cent have more than three brothers and sisters, compared to just 13% for the general population of young people (Table 1).

The interviews provide more precise information on the social situation of the families (see Appendix). Many of the interviewees said their parents have a combination of problems concerning employment, addiction, health, violence, and sometimes delinquency. More specifically, it appears many of them have had housing difficulties from a very early age.[8] The interviews, particularly those conducted in the Paris region where the housing market is the tightest, are full of experiences of housing insecurity. For example, one of the interviewees, 'Hachim', left Morocco at age 9 to join his then-homeless mother in France. He and his mother lived with family members or in hotels and experienced housing instability. 'We changed things all the time,' he said. 'I must have lived in 10 or so *départements* and sometimes in several places in the same *département*.' They ended up in an apartment much too small for their family until a social worker learned of their situation and offered Hachim a place in a child welfare structure. This type of housing course is not rare. 'Jason' left French Guiana at age 6 after his parents divorced, moving to the Paris region with his mother and two brothers. On one of his brother's birthdays, his father burst into their apartment and ransacked it. Jason was taken into care because his mother subsequently had no other choice but to live in a garage. The young people assisted as unaccompanied foreign minors have experienced particularly insecure trajectories, frequently living on the street. At the first wave of the survey, 63% said they had been in situations where they did not know where to sleep, and 51% had spent at least 1 night on the street before being taken under care. The same situation applies to the other young people, but to a lesser extent, the percentages standing at 22% and 14%, respectively.

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(7) According to the Trajectories and Origins survey, in 2008, among the population aged 18–29 residing in metropolitan France, 7% were immigrants (born abroad of foreign parents), and 16% were descendants of immigrants (born in France and with at least one immigrant parent).

(8) In the 1970s, reports demonstrated the relationship between the placement of children and the material problems of families, particularly concerning housing (Dupont Fauville, 1973; Bianco and Lamy, 1980).

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the interviewees compared to those of the general population of young people (%)

	All ELAP interviewees	ELAP unaccompanied foreign minors	ELAP non-unaccompanied foreign minors	All ENRJ[a] young people
Education				
No diploma	35	28	37	16
Vocational qualification	30	58	21	16
High school diploma	31	14	36	52
Further-education diploma	5	0	6	16
Situation				
Studies	19	9	22	52
Apprenticeship or paid internship	8	13	6	7
Temp worker	4	6	3	
Permanent contract / civil servant	18	29	14	
Fixed-term contract	12	17	10	22
No contract	2	2	2	
Subsidized employment	3	5	3	
Other contract	1	0	1	
Jobseeker	28	19	31	15
Economically inactive	6	1	7	4
Origin				
Born in metropolitan France	59			
Accompanied migration	16			
Unaccompanied migration	26			
Place of residence, second wave				
Île-de-France	49	67	43	
Nord-Pas-de-Calais	34	13	41	
Other[b]	18	21	16	
Children situation				
No children	88	89	88	97
Child(ren)/pregnant	12	11	12	3
Partnership status				
Lives with partner	17	4	21	8
Has but does not live with partner	33	38	32	16
Single	50	58	47	75
No. of brothers & sisters				
No brother or sister	9	17	6	8
1–3 brothers & sisters	52	53	52	79
3+ brothers & sisters	39	30	42	13
Education level of mother				
Never attended school, primary or middle school	35	61	26	
High school	21	8	25	
Further	12	6	13	
Doesn't know	32	24	35	
Sample size	398	128	270	4,555

(a) *Enquête nationale sur les ressources des jeunes* (national survey on the resources of young people), administered with young people aged 18–24 by DREES and INSEE, 2014. Here, we have selected young people aged 18–22 in order to compare them with the ELAP interviewees.
(b) At the time of the survey's second wave, some of the interviewees may have left the *département* they lived in during the first wave.
Sources: ELAP W2, INED–Printemps, 2015.

Some interviewees also experienced housing insecurity during their placement, being 'shunted around' from one structure to another (Potin, 2012). At the first wave, 22% had lived in three welfare structures, 9% in four, and 17% in five or more. Over one-third of the interviewees said they had had to leave a structure at which they would have liked to stay. Naturally, stabler housing trajectories exist (half of the young people were placed in one or two structures), but for those affected, this instability is considered a source of major suffering.

These young people were thus exposed at an early age to housing difficulties and forced relocations in the circuit of institutional accommodation, some of them experiencing what Watt (2018) referred to as 'recurrent displacement', i.e. repeated forced relocations. People having experienced these trajectories have concrete knowledge of housing insecurity. And when they leave the child welfare system, they are once again exposed to the same situation.

II. Leaving the welfare system: a programmed departure

With budget restrictions and a shortage of places in housing structures, social workers at the child welfare services are encouraged to limit assistance periods and remove young people from the system so as to admit new individuals.[9] Their work echoes that of the agents of the RATP public transport operator's 'assistance division' studied by Emmanuel Soutrenon, the agents' task being as much to assist homeless people as to remove them from the metro (Soutrenon, 2001). The young people are aware of this dual dimension in social work. While they generally perceive caseworkers' support as assistance that helps them to become autonomous, many of them see this support as a way of accelerating their departure from the system. Reaching the age of majority (18 years) is a turning point after which they feel unwelcome in child welfare structures. In fact, they may be forced to leave their housing structure. This paper draws on a selection of interviews that effectively illustrate how young people feel about the crucial moment of leaving the child welfare services, but practically all the interviewees mention the pressure placed on them, regardless of the welfare structure.

1. Preparing for departure: a factor in housing anxiety

Preparing to leave the placement structure concerns all aspects of the young people's lives. To begin, caseworkers tell them to complete short and vocational-based studies (vocational qualifications[10] or vocational

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(9) The same way of 'managing' the shortage of places can be seen at accommodation centres for people who are homeless, where the main objective is to free up beds to increase the stock for people calling the national number for the assistance and orientation of people experiencing homelessness (in France, 115) (Gardella, 2014).

(10) In France, the *certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* (CAP).

high-school diplomas) to ensure their rapid integration in the job market (Jung, 2017). This objective is experienced differently by young people according to their life courses and ambitions. This guidance is accepted by those seeking to enter the job market as quickly as possible, which is often the case among unaccompanied foreign minors. 'Bakari' was born in Mauritania and sent to France by his family at age 17 for healthcare reasons (Bakari suffers from an eye disease). He chose a work-study training programme to become a butcher on the advice of caseworkers. His main concern was to enter the job market to help his family and village (he formed a support organization with his fellow Mauritanians), and he immediately approved of the plan. But other interviewees regret they were pressured not to continue longer studies. 'Séverine', born in Côte d'Ivoire and having arrived in France at age 14, was forced to drop out of school after age 12 (she was exploited by her aunt in France who required her to take care of all household tasks). School is particularly important to her. After high school, she insisted on going to a school for social work and home economics, which led to tense discussions with her caseworker at the child welfare services. 'I said to him, "I am going to get a degree, and what's more, at a private school". And she said, "You're completely mad. It's impossible".' Similarly, 'Laurence' fought to continue her education in the private sector after being placed at age 11. Her education was always of vital importance to her parents. 'They really wanted an education. … I kept that from my parents.' After having to repeat a year twice, she obtained a high school diploma in literature and then had to contest her caseworkers to be able to enter university and study foreign languages. 'When I finished high school, I was clearly made to understand that I had to enter the job market and make my way financially,' she said. So, while some of the interviewees admit that social workers' actions correspond to a principle of reality ('[The extension contract] goes up to the age of 21, so it's true that you have to consider what comes after,' said Laurence), some of them are critical and regret having to ensure their financial autonomy by any means with a view to leaving the institution.

The interviewees also show ambivalence towards learning to become autonomous in daily life and the way they are informed of upcoming deadlines. Regarding housing, to help the young people to learn about the concrete aspects of daily life, including cooking, housework, and household budget management, many of them are directed towards structures at which they are less supervised. The objective of this 'autonomous accommodation'[11] is to help individuals gradually leave a system seen as too 'cocooning' (Frechon and Marquet, 2018).[12] It also serves to prevent young people from becoming

(11) Accommodation aimed at preparing for housing autonomy but still involving constraints, including institutional rules, restricted visiting rights, and support in budget management.

(12) Many of the interviewees accessed this type of structure. Shortly before their institutional accommodation came to an end, 28% were living in an autonomous housing unit and 20% in a young workers' hostel.

overly attached to a structure they will eventually have to leave. Individuals having grown up in a foster family are often transferred to autonomous housing or a young workers' hostel as they approach age 18. In addition, caseworkers inform the young people of the deadlines ahead throughout their time in the child welfare services, regularly reminding them that their presence at the institution is temporary and that they need to prepare for their departure. The French act on child protection of 2016 provides for a mandatory interview at age 17 to 'envision the conditions for support in the path to autonomy', during which the main dates are reiterated. The aim is for the young people to take on board as quickly as possible the temporal limits of child welfare assistance and to find solutions to become independent as soon as they reach adulthood.[13]

Unsurprisingly, even though they are considered important steps in preparing for departure, these measures are taken badly by many of the interviewees. During their placement, such measures undermine the construction of a 'home' by making it impossible for them to establish roots and form an attachment to their place of residence (Jouve and Pichon, 2015). The interviewees see them as a pressure to depart and a source of stress. While the stated objective of 'developing housing autonomy in placement' is to make the 'desertion' less brutal (Frechon and Marquet, 2018), many of them consider that the aim of these structures is as much to accelerate their departure as it is to prepare for it. A feeling shared by the interviewees is that the actions of social workers are mainly informed by the necessity of the departure. Séverine, accommodated in a home before leaving the child welfare system, said, 'For them, you have to be autonomous, earn money, and leave.' The interviewees also reproach caseworkers for exacerbating their anxiety regarding the future. Jason had a bumpy placement history, being placed in numerous structures, first in a home and then with four foster families. He believes young people in the child welfare system are inculcated early on with the fear of insecurity. 'We were afraid of that. … You feel the pressure straightaway. You feel it from a very young age.' 'Coralie', placed at age 19 in three hotels and then in a social residence, suffered considerably from the stress caused by uncertainties over her departure and complained that social workers cultivate the anxiety of the individuals they support: 'I'm not a fearful person, someone who gets stressed, but they make it so you feel afraid. Social workers stress you out when they tell you, "This accommodation is not definitive".'

While the work of child welfare caseworkers is aimed at helping young people to develop autonomy, it also makes them feel extremely anxious about housing. And the older the individual becomes, the greater the pressure.

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(13) This type of support is observed in accommodation systems for homeless people, where the main aim is to prevent them from settling and instead to encourage them to actively search for housing (Gardella, 2016). The aim is to prevent shelterization, whereby people experiencing homelessness remain in social housing intended to be temporary.

2. The end of protective status

Reaching legal adulthood marks a disruption in welfare assistance since, as part of a potential extension contract, assistance ceases to be a right and instead becomes contractual.[14] Young people benefitting from an extension contract lose their statutory protection and, simultaneously, feel a sense of illegitimacy for remaining in a child welfare structure. This perception is related to the trend of budget restrictions, as a result of which the duration of extension contracts is decreasing, and some professionals use this tool to set the pace of the objectives to be met with a view to departure (Jung, 2011; Frechon et al., 2017). 'Marzio', who arrived in France from Romania at age 13 and was accommodated in a home until he was 17, entered a structure for young adults past the age of majority. He was satisfied with the aid provided by the child welfare services but laments this pressure: 'Because at 18, they tell you to start thinking already about leaving, in a way. … At every meeting I had to renew the extension contract, the same question weighed on me, the same pressure.' Séverine felt the same way:

> In the second year [of the extension contract], they started to say, 'It might be signed, and it might not.' And they started asking me, 'How do you intend to earn a living?' … When you know the extension contract may come to an end, you return to your family, you become responsible for yourself, or you have nothing.

'Lucie', who was in a young workers' hostel before her departure, spoke about the violence of the turning point of reaching legal adulthood:

> When you reach the age of majority, you have a knife in your back. It's nice when you're a minor, then things get ugly when you become an adult. Being a minor is great, but being an adult is a catastrophe. The obligation is over, and they tell you so! 'At 18, there are no more obligations, we are not required to keep you, we can put you on the street. In France, you are considered to have reached the age of majority.' And they tell you, 'You're considered an adult, so out you go!'

The housing status of young people in child welfare structures is precarious. The manager of the institution may at any time terminate the resident's contract, subject to compliance with a period of notice. Young people are reminded in other ways that their accommodation is no longer a right. For example, they may be obliged to pay rent to remain in their structure, which they see as a way of pushing them to leave. Sometimes the pressure is so great that some individuals leave on their own initiative. 'Djibril', who arrived in France at age 15, decided to leave his home because his caseworkers reminded him of the necessity of his departure every time they met. 'I felt like I was being pushed a little bit to leave,' he said.

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(14) Those preparing to enter the job market (studies, occupational training, jobseekers, etc.) may request an extension of aid by committing to a 'project' aimed at quickly developing their autonomy.

Perceiving oneself as undesirable has substantial psychological impacts. Coralie, who lived in a social-housing structure, made a connection between her attacks of spasmophilia with the anxiety generated by this situation. Laurence said, 'When you are in a structure on a *jeunes majeurs* extension contract, you tell yourself, "At 21, this is all over".' Séverine suffered considerably from departure-related stress:

> Frankly, I was really anxious, extremely anxious. When I arrived at the age of 20 and a half, I told myself, 'Maybe I'll go to university, do the whole student thing.' And when I began to understand that that was going to be really difficult for me, I couldn't sleep, I imagined myself in many situations. I searched everywhere, for intergenerational housing, but everything was laced with anxiety. I thought about being on the street … Can it ever be ideal to tell someone for 2 years, 'You will be autonomous, you will get your stuff and go'?

The prospect of leaving a structure with no solution thus produces what Watt (2018) called 'housing anxiety', a term referring 'to a prospective ruptured sense of place—home and/or neighbourhood—because of a potential, forced external real-world move…. Such displacement anxiety generates a profound sense of ontological insecurity as people literally do not "know their place"' (p. 74). This feeling of not knowing one's place is at the root of a stress similar to that of households threatened by eviction (Desmond, 2016). Similarly, individuals in child welfare structures suffer from a lack of roots and security and feel that their lives may be turned upside down. Although no legal proceedings are initiated, the end of child welfare housing may be experienced as a programmed expulsion. Watt stresses the diversity of expulsions and makes a distinction between 'eviction', involving a forced evacuation from the home, and 'displacement', involving a responsive mobility that is chosen (to varying degrees) but always related to pressures external to the household (Watt, 2018). Whether the individuals assisted by the child welfare services choose or do not choose to leave the institution, all are pressured from the start, and as a last resort, those who do not leave of their own volition are thrown out, as illustrated in the following cases.

3. The summons to leave

When the end of the legal duty of care approaches, the institution informs the young people that the countdown to their departure has begun.[15] Lucie said that a caseworker in a centre for young workers threatened to evict her. 'They gave me an ultimatum. They said, "In 2 weeks". Two weeks? Do you realize what that means? I had no job, nothing at all, but I was being thrown out.' Fortunately, a caseworker pleaded her cause and stressed the necessity of honouring the notice period of 1 month. With the caseworker's help, Lucie sent out numerous CVs and found a job at a retirement home in a week. But

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(15) This message is generally delivered at the mandatory interview at the age of 17, as mentioned earlier.

she received no assistance in her search for housing, and after spending 3 nights at a hotel, on her own initiative and using the Internet, she found accommodation at a young workers' hostel in the 13th arrondissement of Paris, close to the place of work. She remains bitter about this lack of assistance on her departure. The deadlines are sometimes even tighter. 'Stéphane' said that the day before he turned 18 he was told, 'You'll be 18 tomorrow, you'll have to leave [the home]'. He had seen his child welfare officer 4 months earlier and told her he did not want to continue his extension contract. The day he turned 18, she made no contact with him. Instead, the caseworkers at the home asked him where he intended to go and helped him move in with his parents. However, finding an income-generating job may be taken as a pretext for terminating housing assistance. As soon as 'Nadjela' found a job as a nursing auxiliary on a permanent contract, she was thrown out:

> They were just waiting for me to get a permanent contract. 'OK, now you've got one, you're out for good.' And they chucked me out just like that. … Other than that, they didn't care, they didn't give a damn about me. From that point on, their approach was, 'You've got a permanent contract, you're earning money, whatever happens, you're out.'

Individuals failing to establish what social workers consider a realistic plan to enter the job market also expose themselves to the risk of being pushed out. This is true for young people having ended their studies or having no occupational plans, as well as for those whose ambitions are seen as incompatible with the deadlines imposed by the institution. Laurence, who, as we saw earlier, attended further education against caseworkers' advice, was summoned to leave the home on her birthday. 'I was already out on the day of my birthday. They kicked me out of the structure.' Excerpts from the interviews reflect the violence of being forced out, echoing the traumatic nature of expulsions (Vincent, 2014; Desmond, 2016). Naturally, many of the interviewees talk about the dedication of social workers who do their best to find solutions. For example, Hachim had a strong relationship with a social worker and a caseworker. 'They always looked out for me like I was their child,' he said. Similarly, Djibril considers the head of his former home as a 'second mother'. When he left, she went so far as to be his guarantor for his flat rental. But even where social workers try to limit the violence stemming from forced departures, this does not erase the resentment. Apart from young people seeking to return to their families at all costs, all the interviewees report this sense of bitterness.

Ultimately, just 29% of the interviewees left the child welfare services of their own volition or through a common agreement with the social workers (and of that 29%, over one-third left because they had had enough of the child welfare services and just 28% because they thought they no longer needed child welfare assistance). In contrast, 27% said it was the child welfare services that ruled on their departure, and 38% left because the legal duty of care no

longer applied to them. The majority, then, did not choose the moment of their departure (36% said their departure came too soon) and had to cope with the constraints imposed by the institution.

Where forced departures occur, they have consequences on all aspects of life. The risk of homelessness is particularly high for those forced to leave. Among the interviewees whose departure was decided on by the child welfare services, 16% have since experienced living on the street, compared with practically 0% for those leaving under less constrained circumstances. The end of legal care also leads to a hasty entry into the labour force. As with the homeless people housed at accommodation and social rehabilitation centres who are obliged to accept jobs regardless of the conditions if they are to benefit from housing (Lanzaro, 2014), this leads to a situation in which employment is reduced to its basic aspect as a generator of income. Having failed to find a job in his particular field (tiling), Marzio had to accept a job as a mechanic, even though it held no appeal for him. The example of 'Aya' clearly shows the knock-on effects of the rupture with institutional accommodation. Following the termination of her contract on the day of her 19th birthday, she had to leave her home. She thought she would look for work but instead ended up on the street, forced to call the homeless accommodation assistance number[16] or sleep in bus shelters. Naturally, not all the young people experienced such precarious trajectories, and the next section investigates the way individuals enter the housing market after they leave the child welfare services.

## III. Carving out a place and finding stability on the housing market

After the departure from the child welfare system, the interviewees faced numerous disadvantages in the housing market. The first obstacle to obtaining rental accommodation was their age (Bugeja-Bloch, 2013). Also, compared to other young people, fewer of the interviewees were students (Table 1), depriving them of student-specific aid such as third-party guarantees.[17] For the others, 28% were unemployed and 6% economically inactive. Those in employment had precarious positions (10% of them in temp work, 9% in subsidized employment, 30% on fixed-term contracts, and 5% with no contract). This can be attributed to their low educational levels, over one-third having no diploma or merely a *brevet* (4 years of secondary education). Besides having low incomes, they were rarely able to count on family support to help them financially or stand as guarantors for a rental, with 17% having lost their mother, 21% their father, and 8% having lost both. Many of the parents lived abroad (the case of

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(16) In France, 115.

(17) In France, the *caution locative étudiante* (student third-party guarantee) is a state guarantee that helps students lacking personal guarantors to access housing.

22% of the mothers and 21% of the fathers), and the child-parent relationship may have been broken or conflictual. For those with mothers, 13% no longer had a relationship with them and 12% did not get along well with them; for fathers, the same percentages were 21% and 17%. Even those who had good relationships with their parents rarely called on their support because the latter were often in vulnerable situations themselves. The position of these young people on the housing market was thus extremely unfavourable. But their situations were contrasted. Not all had the same support or the same socio-occupational integration level, and housing market pressure varied from one region to the next. Three main housing situations emerged in the second wave of the survey: the continuation of an institutional trajectory, support from family and friends, and the acquisition of housing autonomy (Figure 1). These housing situations are not mutually exclusive, and the interviewees may have experienced several of them in their residential trajectories. Institutional or third-party accommodation was more frequent among individuals having recently left the child welfare system, while rented housing was more widespread among those having left the system some time ago, who may have been housed in institutional accommodation earlier in their lives. The quantitative data were used here to describe the profile of the young people in these different

Figure 1. Housing situation of young people at the time of the survey (%)
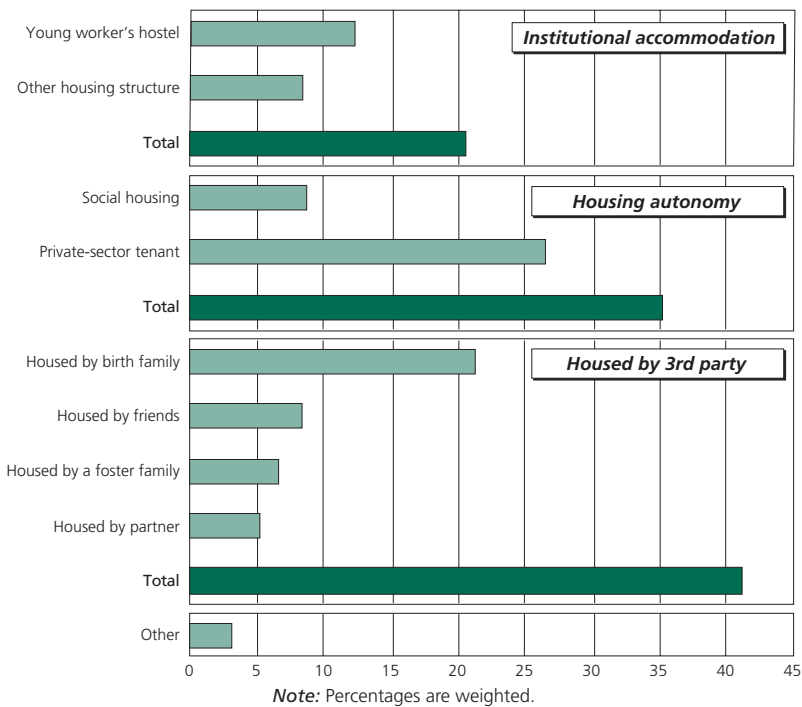
Note: Percentages are weighted.
Coverage: Young people having left the child welfare system and not housed by the child welfare services.
Source: ELAP W2, 2015, INED–Printemps.

housing situations, and the interviews were then selected so as to highlight the life courses leading to those situations.

1. Institutional housing trajectories

Nearly one-quarter of the interviewees are housed by institutions, two-thirds of them living in a young workers hostel and one-third housed by an organization.[18] A small minority are housed in hotels, mother-and-child centres, social housing, and accommodation and social rehabilitation centres. Young people continuing their trajectory in the institutional sector are thus able to access relatively stable housing and avoid emergency accommodation centres providing accommodation solely on a one-off basis. However, the profile of individuals accommodated in homes for young workers is extremely different from that of individuals having accessed other temporary housing structures.

The population living at homes for young workers is distinguished by its proximity to the job market. After obtaining, in most cases, a vocational diploma (Table 2B), one-quarter of the interviewees are now completing apprenticeships or paid internships, and 57% have a job. Having an income, 85% of them can pay their rent in full. Another aspect of this population is that almost none of them have children or are in a couple (Table 2A). Being single and childless stands as a condition for living in this type of structure. But it is also a deliberate strategy. In the interviews, young people living at homes for young workers say that their occupational integration is more important than building a family, the latter being envisioned only once they have established themselves. Individuals living at homes for young workers have also experienced relatively stable housing trajectories (with 'just' 4% having had to live on the street since leaving the child welfare system). Bakari's experience clearly illustrates this type of trajectory. He started out in an emergency home at age 17, followed by two homes in the Paris region, of which he has excellent memories. After choosing an occupational direction consistent with social workers' recommendations (to become a butcher), he obtained an extension contract when he reached adulthood and a place in a young workers' hostel in Paris, where he lived for 18 months. He left the child welfare system at age 19, deciding himself not to renew his extension contract because his job made him financially independent. He is single and said he did not want to be in a relationship before establishing himself professionally and setting up his own business. His trajectory is thus disruption-free (he has never experienced housing vulnerability since leaving the child welfare system), and he said he received social workers' support at each step.

In contrast, those living in other housing structures (provided by an organization, hotels, social housing, etc.) are in particularly precarious situations. Of the total, 49% have no diploma or simply a *brevet*. Many of them

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(18) Student housing was classified in the 'Other' category as this is the form of accommodation of the rare interviewees completing further education.

Table 2A. Housing situation at the time of the survey
according to demographic characteristics (% in column)

	Institutional accommodation		Housing autonomy		Housed by third party		Total
	YWH [a]	Other structure	Social housing	Private-sector tenant	Birth family	Other	
Age							
18–20	18	32	*11*	31	73	36	37
21	49	55	67	56	22	44	47
22	33	*13*	*22*	13	*5*	20	16
Sex							
Male	64	52	58	58	50	53	55
Female	36	48	42	42	51	47	45
Background							
Unaccompanied foreign minor	41	40	41	29	*4*	20	25
Non-UFM	59	60	59	71	96	80	75
Region							
Île-de-France	72	69	32	41	57	35	49
Nord Pas-de-Calais	*13*	*24*	58	38	35	41	34
Other [b]	*15*	*7*	*9*	22	*8*	24	17
Conjugal situation							
In a couple	*2*	*7*	27	29	*3*	29	17
Not in a couple	98	93	73	71	97	71	83
Children situation							
No children	99	73	73	83	94	92	12
Has child/children	*1*	*27*	27	17	6	*8*	88
Age when leaving child welfare							
18 or younger (no CJM [c])	*2*	*8*	*9*	16	44	20	19
18–21 (partial CJM)	54	69	45	43	44	32	44
21 exactly (full CJM)	44	*23*	*46*	41	12	48	37
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Sample size	54	32	36	105	75	79	394

(a) Young workers' hostel.
(b) At the second wave, some individuals may have left the *département* that they lived in during the first wave.
(c) *Contrat jeune majeur* (extension contract).
Note: Figures in italics concern sample sizes of under 10. Percentages are weighted.
Coverage: Young people having left the child welfare system and not housed by the child welfare services.
Source: ELAP W1 and W2, INED–Printemps.

left the child welfare system between ages 21 and 23, with the termination or non-renewal of their extension contract, indicating that they were unable to fulfil the conditions of the child welfare services relative to an occupational integration project, since the extension contract serves as a 'filter' retaining only the most committed individuals (Jung, 2011; Frechon and Marquet, 2018). Following their departure from the child welfare system, many of the young people went through difficult periods, one-quarter of them having lived on the street since leaving placement. At the time of the survey, the majority

Table 2B. Housing situation at the time of the survey according
to educational, occupational, and housing trajectory (% in column)

	Institutional accommodation		Housing autonomy		Housed by third party		Total
	YWH	Other structure	Social housing	Private-sector tenant	Birth family	Other third party	
Education							
No diploma or *brevet*	23	49	32	34	45	31	35
Vocational training	34	35	43	27	24	32	30
General or tech high school diploma	9	*4*	6	12	15	18	13
Occupational high school diploma	29	*12*	*15*	18	*13*	14	17
Further-education diploma	*5*	*0*	4	8	*2*	6	5
School year repeat							
Did not repeat	57	56	70	51	27	47	52
Repeated	43	44	30	49	73	53	48
Situation							
Studies	*8*	*15*	9	15	26	25	19
Apprenticeship or internship	26	*2*	6	*7*	*4*	*5*	8
Economically active	57	*30*	54	56	21	23	39
precarious employment[a]	63	65	64	52	56	67	
permanent contract/ civil servant	37	35	36	48	44	33	
Jobseeker	9	36	31	17	45	34	28
Economically inactive	*0*	*17*	*0*	5	*4*	*12*	6
Earns a salary							
No	19	66	41	36	71	75	53
Yes	81	34	59	64	29	25	47
Contribution to rent							
Pays entire rent	85	38	82	87	*0*	*1*	50
Pays part of rent or no rent	*15*	62	*18*	13	100	99	50
Has lived on the street							
Yes	*4*	*24*	*0*	4	*7*	*8*	7
No	96	76	100	96	93	92	93
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Sample size	54	32	36	105	75	79	394

(a) Temp, fixed-term contract, no contract, subsidized employment, other contract.
Note: Figures in italics concern sample sizes of under 10. Percentages are weighted.
Coverage: Young people having left the child welfare system and not housed by the child welfare services.
Source: ELAP W1 and W2, INED–Printemps.

were unemployed or economically inactive, and only one-third had earned a salary in the previous month. Their low income explains their relegation in the accommodation system and why only 38% pay their rent in full, indicating a form of aid close to social emergency and welfare. A further characteristic of these individuals is that many of them have children. Women with children

have priority access to emergency shelter (Marpsat, 1999; Lanzaro, 2018), which explains their strong representation in these structures.

The trajectories leading to this type of housing are summed up in the experience of two interviewees. 'Célestine', having arrived in France from the Congo when she was 10, initially lived with her uncle and aunt. At 17, conflicts at home forced her to spend a few weeks on the street before being provided accommodation in a hotel by the child welfare services, followed by an autonomous apartment. When she turned 18, she obtained an extension contract and registered for vocational training in childcare but did not obtain a diploma. Underperforming at school, she learned that she was pregnant and did not return to her course. Her child welfare caseworker explained to her that structures for young people over 18 were not authorized to house children. She then searched for a place at a mother-and-child centre, but with no success. At the time of the birth, Célestine had no housing solution. The caseworker met with the father of her child and asked him to house the young woman and her baby, but the cohabitation experience soured after a few weeks, and Célestine was placed in a hotel with her son for 2 years by the local social services. Her trajectory is one of occupational precarity, a lack of housing, and single parenthood.

The example of Laurence, who refused to complete vocational training, reveals another type of trajectory leading to institutional accommodation. After being forced to leave her placement structure, she was unable to find housing and called on the help of her parents. She also called the homeless accommodation assistance number and obtained a place at an accommodation and social rehabilitation centre. But Laurence had serious health problems and was forced to abandon her studies. Her situation today is highly precarious. She has no income, relegating her to an institution for people in serious difficulty. Célestine and Laurence have thus diverged from the path recommended by the child welfare services, both finding that occupational integration and financial autonomy were not guaranteed when leaving the child welfare system.

In short, individuals accommodated in homes for young workers generally comply with the path recommended by the child welfare services and were supported by caseworkers able to guide them towards these structures. In contrast, for the other forms of institutional accommodation, the young individuals concerned have strayed from that path, experiencing interruptions in housing assistance and being more often the recipients of a 'second chance'. Depending on their resources and varying ability to meet the objectives set by the institution, the interviewees do not all receive the same level of guidance when it comes to housing.

2. Relying on family and friends

Forty-one per cent of the interviewees are housed by third parties. Those calling on family support are the youngest in the sample (73% aged 18–20) and left the child welfare system at an early age (44% at 18 or earlier). They

have low education levels (45% have no diploma or just 4 years of secondary education) and only a modest presence on the job market (45% are unemployed) (Tables 2A and 2B). They call on the support of their family either by choice or as a last resort when leaving their placement structure where no other housing solution is found. After leaving the child welfare system, Jason, who abandoned a vocational high-school diploma in construction to switch to catering, had a budget of €400. The few private-sector apartment rentals he visited were too expensive or not suitable. Having failed to obtain a place in a young workers' hostel, he moved in with his mother, who was living in social housing. The individuals having been forced to leave the child welfare system also call on the support of close relations pending another solution. If Laurence had not been able to count on her parents, she would have been on the street: 'I was lucky because, despite my situation, I remained in contact with my parents and visited them fairly regularly…. On the very day [of leaving the child welfare system], I was already at my father's.'

Lucie neatly sums up the lack of alternatives that lead to moving back in with parents. 'I couldn't survive. I let it go and returned to my mother's home.' But in many cases, the family only provides a short-term solution either because living together fails to work out or because the material conditions of the accommodation are insufficient.[19] Returning from the army, Hachim was put up by his sister in her studio flat. The cohabitation experience was untenable, and at the time of the second interview, he was 'here and there' at friends' apartments.

The birth family is not the only family to be called on. A minority of the interviewees (5%) are housed by their partner, the formation of a couple being a way of leaving child welfare structures by accessing housing (Frechon, 2005). This mainly concerns young women whose profile is similar to that of young people housed by their family. Most of these women are looking for work, and many of them left the child welfare system at an early age. Meanwhile, 6% of the interviewees continued to live with their foster family, the role of which thus extends beyond the framework of the child welfare services, standing in for the birth family (Frechon and Breugnot, 2018).

In general, leaving the child welfare system at an early age to move back in with parents or form a couple may be a source of extreme housing vulnerability. These trajectories imply a departure from institutional guidance towards fixed-rent housing (homes for young workers or social housing). Where the cohabitation fails to work out and the young individuals fall back on institutional assistance, often via the homeless accommodation assistance number, they end up in the least favourable housing, often emergency shelters. At age 18, Laetitia left the child welfare system on an impulse and returned to her mother's, but the latter threw her out not long after. Laetitia then called

(19) On the weakening of family relations in the event of institutional placement, see Potin (2012) and Stettinger (2019).

on the help of her grandmother, before accessing a young workers' hostel with a bad reputation (with 'alcohol and fights'). 'It was that or the street,' she said. Interruptions in housing trajectories may thus come at a great cost, since, in the event of a return to institutions, they result in a downgrade in the housing position. Individuals are then required to 'climb the stairs' as they strive towards housing autonomy.[20]

3. Housing autonomy

Lastly, one-third of the interviewees succeed in accessing a housing solution in their own name and pay the rent as a tenant. The housing of three-quarters of this group is in the private sector and one-quarter in the social sector.

Regarding access to private-sector housing, in addition to the local housing environment (access being easier in the *départements* in the Nord region and the provinces than in the Paris region), the individual's job-market situation is decisive. Many private-sector tenants have permanent work contracts (Table 2B). The sector is also more accessible for couples, with over one-quarter of tenants being in a couple. The case of 'Lucinda' illustrates how a partner may compensate for a lack of occupational integration or low income. After high school, she left the foster family with whom she had lived since the age of 2 to attend a course in biology at the University of Lens. She managed to pay the rent on an apartment through her student grant and third-party guarantee. Her partner, an IT student, soon moved in with her. At the time of the second interview, the couple had moved to a larger apartment. Lucia had dropped out of school and now had a permanent contract as a home helper, but the salary was low (€800 part-time). She obtained a rented apartment thanks to her parents-in-law, the latter paying their son's share of the rent and standing as guarantors. Lucinda is extremely dependent on her partner and parents-in-law for the apartment and believes it would have been difficult for her to find housing had she been single. Another way of pooling resources is flat-sharing (7% of tenants live with friends). The individuals having accessed private-sector housing have thus entered the job market and/or are not living alone.

But the private sector is far from synonymous with housing stability and good living conditions. Some of the interviewees live in cramped or poorly situated housing, suffer from an excessive affordability ratio,[21] or experience an unpleasant flat-share. The case of 'Julien' illustrates the difficulty of finding satisfactory housing. Having had enough of institutional housing after living in numerous structures, he left 2 months before the end of his extension contract to live in a flat-share with friends. Unfortunately, the experience did not

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(20) In France, despite the 2009–2012 national strategy on assisting people who are homeless or poorly housed, which recommends the adoption of a 'housing first' policy, the concept of the 'staircase model' continues to prevail, whereby people who are homeless re-access housing via a series of temporary accommodation solutions marking their gradual integration.

(21) The share of household income spent on housing.

go well, and he moved back in with his mother for a month. He was working in a supermarket at the time and heard that one of his managers was renting a studio apartment. The manager did not ask for a guarantor and Julien moved in, but the rent of €750 proved too high, and Julien found it hard to manage on his monthly salary of €1,200. Thanks to another colleague, he eventually found another apartment for €480 a month but situated an hour from Paris, a long way from his place of work. In most cases, private-sector tenants do not see themselves living in their apartment in the long term. Also, and once again, leaving the institutional sector deprives them of social support and may be a source of housing vulnerability. 'Laura', having lived at a young workers hostel in Roubaix since the age of 17, regrets leaving the system for a flat-share because she was unable to benefit from the assistance of social workers who could have helped her obtain social housing. Her flat-share went badly, and she was forced to move in with her aunt.

The interviewees living in social housing are among the oldest in the sample (only 11% are aged 18–20), a consequence of the time it takes to access such housing. Access is also determined by the characteristics of the local housing market. Young people living in the Paris region, which suffers from a shortage of social housing, access social housing much less than those living in the Nord region of France. In a further aspect, interviewees with children account for a large share of the individuals living in social housing, as families are a priority in the sector. Most striking is that the individuals accessing social housing perfectly fulfil the trajectory recommended by the child welfare services. A large share of them have obtained vocational training diplomas, which caseworkers strongly recommend. Many of them did not have to repeat a school year (Table 2B), reflecting both their performance at school and their adjustment to the constraints of the child welfare services. Some interviewees chose training courses that did not particularly interest them rather than running the risk of not having a diploma when leaving the child welfare system. Lastly, the interviewees in social housing generally explored all the possibilities of child welfare assistance (46% having left at the age of 21 after a 'full' extension contract). This indicates that they were able to build a plan respecting the expectations of social workers (Jung, 2017). At the time of the survey, many of them had jobs. Access to social housing is thus easier for those able to meet the objectives set by caseworkers and those having achieved greater social integration. More specifically, everything takes place as if the young people were guided institutionally towards social housing, the individuals involved having experienced highly institutionalized trajectories with no departure from the institutional circuit. None of the people having accessed this type of housing has had to live on the street since leaving their placement structure. The interviews show that many of them have been housed in homes for young workers, structures they describe as a bridge to social housing, as social workers encourage them to submit a request. This is true of Bakari, who was living in a young workers' hostel at the time of the first interview. When interviewed a year and a half later, he had a permanent

contract and had obtained social housing, to which he had applied on the advice of a caseworker. Social housing is thus accessed following a long child-welfare trajectory with no delays and no interruptions.

When leaving child welfare, the interviewees experience contrasting housing situations that are closely linked to the relational support available, the relationship with institutions, and the sociodemographic characteristics of individuals. Those who comply with social workers' expectations and who do not leave the institutional circuit tend to enter the housing market more easily. For each of them, housing stability and the construction of a household are the main goals.

4. The aspiration to establish housing stability and build a household

Given their past, marked by family problems and housing instability, the main aim of the interviewees is to access stable housing so that they can establish themselves on a lasting basis and build a household. In Hachim's words, 'I want to have a good family and be well set up. I don't want hassle, hotels, a shitty apartment… I've had enough of that.' According to 'Amelle', that she was 'shunted from one home to another' explains her 'desire to settle down'. Another aspiration of those having lived in collective housing is to escape from the control of social workers and binding regulations and forever break away from institutions. For the interviewees, having their own home is synonymous with freedom and the intimacy that has so often been lacking in the past. Laurence dreams about leaving the world of institutional accommodation:

> My aim would be to leave the system, the institution, for good, to really leave the system and be able to say, 'Maybe I'll still have social workers guiding me in small steps, but the thought of being able to leave definitively.' And then live my life like everyone else.

The determination to be able to welcome family and friends and potentially form a family is also central to housing plans. When they have an apartment, some of the interviewees use it to temporarily house their placed brothers and sisters or family members. Since Bakari obtained a social-housing unit, his brother has joined him there. Generally speaking, unlike the world of the child welfare services, these young people aspire to having a home in which they can live on a lasting basis and do as they please.

The availability of social housing is vital to these plans. Social housing is more affordable than private-sector housing and guarantees housing stability as the lease period is unlimited. The interviews show that most interviewees have put their names on the social-housing waiting list. 'Tina', living in a young workers hostel, dreams of a social-housing apartment. 'It would mean stability. Another step forward.' Those having accessed this type of housing talk about the beneficial effects of housing stability. Nadjela, who recently learned that she had obtained social housing and would be able to leave her social residence,

was delighted. 'It's a home for life…. I will finally be in a place I won't have to leave!' Similarly, for Coralie, obtaining social housing through a procedure based on the enforceable right to housing[22] represented the end of all things temporary. 'I no longer have the panic that comes with saying, "This isn't a definitive home, I have to change homes yet again".' After the programmed departure of the child welfare experience, social housing is a place from which young people cannot be ousted easily. The interviewees say that this housing stability has effects on their physical and mental health. Coralie's attacks of spasmophilia have stopped since she obtained social housing:

> [Coralie]: I don't have them anymore, not now. My situation is more stable and I'm at my house, not at somebody else's house and not housed by a social worker.

> [Interviewer]: Do you make a direct connection between your health and housing situation?

> [Coralie]: It stressed me out because it doesn't last forever. The social workers couldn't provide us with definitive housing, and on top of that, I couldn't find work. So naturally, I had stress-related crises.

Social housing also serves to secure life courses. 'Cécile' has had financial difficulties since splitting up with her boyfriend. She says that if she had not lived in social housing and had been required to pay a high rent, she would not have been able to manage. '[Social housing] enables you to live more comfortably and resume your life on a solid foundation.' For Coralie, who at the time of the second interview had lost her job, it was social housing and its low cost that had kept her from falling into a precarious existence. Obtaining social housing can even allow people to follow through on their plans, as the low rent increases the resources available to them. Laura, a private-sector tenant, applied for social housing because she wanted to resume her studies. '[Social-housing] rents are less expensive and more affordable for students.' Social housing thus provides young people with security and helps to loosen the constraints stemming from their modest resources. Naturally, an idealized vision of social housing should be avoided, and some of the interviewees reported substandard and unsatisfactory housing or housing in stigmatized neighbourhoods. But given the scarcity of alternatives, it is often the only suitable and long-term housing option.

While social housing is the short-term objective, those with the resources enabling them to look to the future dream of buying a house. Home ownership stands as a symbol of autonomy and social status (Cartier et al., 2008; Gilbert, 2013; Lambert, 2015) and is considered a form of protection against social risks (Castel and Haroche, 2001). The dream of owning a home is particularly strong for the interviewees with children, confirming the relationship between

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(22) The French law on the enforceable right to housing, enacted on 5 March 2007, creates a universal right to housing guaranteed in theory by the State for any person unable to access decent and independent housing by their own means.

having an individual house and building a family (Bourdieu et al., 1990). For these young parents, providing their children with good living conditions is all the more important as they themselves were deprived of such conditions. As Djibril says, 'I want to give my daughter the opportunity I didn't have…. [The house] is a form of continuity for her well-being.' After the years spent in the child welfare system, housing independence symbolizes the acquisition of autonomy (Abdelnour and Lambert, 2014).

Conclusion

Many of the young people assisted by the child welfare services suffer from housing vulnerability during childhood or adolescence. Yet the programmed departure from their accommodation structure instils a sense of insecurity in a place that is supposed to stand as a refuge for them, which results in stress and anxiety.[23] Without denying the protective action of the institution, the latter also generates vulnerability in the lives of those it protects.[24] Above all, the forced departure has considerable social consequences. As well as leading to precarious situations, it creates a sense of bitterness among young people and the feeling that the institutions control their destinies, confirming that expulsions accentuate the distance with institutions (Deboulet and Lafaye, 2018). Moreover, while the young people in question aspire to housing stability, their access to the housing market takes place in an unequal manner. Those playing the game of the institution, i.e. doing all they can to obtain a job as soon as possible, even if it does not correspond to their aspirations, and not leaving the institutional circuit succeed in obtaining the best accommodation, followed by autonomous housing. In contrast, the individuals unable or unwilling to comply with institutional constraints are the most exposed to housing vulnerability upon their departure, as the interruptions in their trajectories lead to their downgrading in the accommodation system, hindering their access to social housing. This echoes Brunetaux's (2007) observations on accommodation for people who are homeless, whereby such accommodation is helpful for individuals who want and are able to succeed but neglects other individuals. The child welfare system also operates as a 'sorting station', enabling the best-equipped young people to forge a successful path but relegating the most socially disqualified to the margins of the housing market.

(23) Policies today appear to have taken the problem into account as France's 'national strategy' on the fight against poverty, unveiled on 13 September 2018 by the French president, seeks to extend child welfare services to the age of 21 to prevent young people from leaving the child welfare system at the age of 18 with no solution.

(24) In this respect, it is striking that the child welfare system is more intractable on enforced departures from its structures than on justice for adult tenants failing to pay their rent. For the young people concerned, no negotiations are possible, evictions are not suspended during winter, and no recourse is available.

APPENDIX

List of quoted interviews

First name[a]	Birth country	Place of residence before leaving child welfare	Situation, interview 1	Situation, interview 2
Hachim	Morocco	Hotel	Soldier, lives in barracks, no children, single	Unemployed, living with friends, no children, single
Séverine	Côte d'Ivoire (arrived in France at 14)	Home (shared apartment)	On training course, personal caregiver, no children, social residence	
Laurence	France	Home (shared apartment)	Single, unemployed, accommodation and social rehabilitation centre	
Lucie	France	YWH	Works at a garage, no children, single, lives with her mother	
Stéphane	France	Home on semi-autonomous basis	Neither in training nor looking for a job, no children, single, lives with his mother	
Aya	Côte d'Ivoire	Home on semi-autonomous basis	No children, single, unemployed, lives with the mother of a friend	
Coralie	France	Social residence	No children, single, subsidized employment at town hall, social housing	Single, unemployed, social housing
Jason	French Guiana	Foster family	On vocational training course, no children, single, lives with his mother	
Laetitia	France	Foster family	Unemployed, boyfriend, no children, YWH	Still in a couple, lives with partner (private-sector tenant), occupational training course on internship basis
Tina	Congo (arrived in France at 13)	Student housing	Employee at McDonald's, no children, single, YWH	
Laura	France	YWH	'Emploi d'avenir' integration employment, no children, single, private-sector tenant	Social housing
Amelle	France	Home	No children, on a management assistant vocational training course, boyfriend, tenant	Separated from partner, jobseeker, has moved (still in private sector)

First name[a]	Birth country	Place of residence before leaving child welfare	Situation, interview 1	Situation, interview 2
Nadjela	Cameroon (arrived in France at 6)	YWH	Nursing auxiliary, boyfriend, no children, tenant of a studio apartment in a social residence	
Bakari	Mauritania arrived in France at 17)	Home	Butcher (permanent contract), no children, single, YWH	Social housing
Cécile	France	YWH	On a training course, in a couple, social housing	Separated, vocational training on work-study basis, social housing
Julien	France	Apartment in charity structure	Unemployed, girlfriend, no children, lives alone, private-sector tenant	
Lucinda	France	Foster family	In a couple, biology student, private-sector tenant	In a couple, home helper, has moved (still a private-sector tenant)
Djibril	Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (arrived in France at 15)	Home	On a vocational training course in management, no children, social housing	Permanent contract (adviser at telephony company), 1 child, in a couple, social housing
Marc	France	YWH	Glassmaker, in a couple, no children, private-sector tenant	Private-sector house rental, glassmaker, in a couple
Marzio	Romania (arrived in France at 13)	'Young person over 18' structure	In a couple, no children, works as a mechanic, 'young person over 18' structure	In a couple, no children, tiler, tenant in a 'young person over 18' structure
Célestine	Congo (arrived in France at 10	Autonomous child-welfare apartment	1 child, separated from father, active solidarity income, social housing	In a couple, social housing, not working or on a training course, health problems

(a) First names have been changed.
Note: The interviews were selected to reflect the various housing situations after placement.
Source: ELAP W2, 2015, INED–Printemps.

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Pascale Dietrich-Ragon • Leaving the Child Welfare Services: From Institutional Housing to the Initial Steps on the Housing Market

In France, 138,000 children and adolescents in danger—1.6% of the population aged under 18—are cared for by the child welfare services (Aide Sociale à l'Enfance). While they enter care at different ages, all must leave upon reaching age 18, when the legal duty of care ends, or at 21 if they obtain an extension contract (contrat jeune majeur). After leaving, they must provide for themselves and can no longer rely on the child welfare services for housing. Using data from the ELAP longitudinal survey on the autonomy of young adult care-leavers (Étude longitudinale sur l'accès à l'autonomie après le placement) and qualitative interviews, this article explores how these young adults find a place to live and how they perceive the experience. While they have faced housing insecurity from early on, their programmed expulsion from care is a new source of insecurity, thereby causing them stress and anxiety. In addition, access to housing is unequal. Those who follow the rules and have not left the institutional circuit get places in the best accommodations, and later a place of their own. Those unable or unwilling to comply with institutional constraints are the most vulnerable after leaving care.

Pascale Dietrich-Ragon • Quitter l'aide sociale à l'enfance. De l'hébergement institutionnel aux premiers pas sur le marché immobilier

En France, 138 000 enfants ou adolescents sont pris en charge par l'Aide sociale à l'enfance (ASE) au titre de l'enfance en danger, soit 1,6 % des mineurs. Si les jeunes entrent dans le dispositif à des âges très variés, tous doivent en revanche en sortir à 18 ans, âge de fin de la prise en charge légale, ou à 21 ans maximum s'ils obtiennent un contrat jeune majeur. Ils doivent alors subvenir eux-mêmes à leurs besoins et ne peuvent plus dépendre de l'ASE pour se loger. À partir des données de l'enquête Elap (Étude longitudinale sur l'accès à l'autonomie après le placement) et d'entretiens qualitatifs, cet article explore les modalités et le vécu de la sortie de placement sur le plan résidentiel. Alors que les jeunes ont souffert précocement de la précarité du logement, le départ programmé de l'institution est une nouvelle source d'insécurité résidentielle, qui génère stress et angoisse. Par ailleurs, l'intégration sur le marché immobilier s'effectue de façon inégale. Ceux qui ont accepté de jouer le jeu de l'institution et ne sont pas sortis du circuit institutionnel réussissent à intégrer les meilleurs hébergements, puis un logement autonome. Au contraire, les jeunes qui ne parviennent pas ou ne souhaitent pas se plier aux contraintes institutionnelles sont les plus exposés à la précarité résidentielle à l'issue de leur prise en charge.

Pascale Dietrich-Ragon • Salir de la asistencia social a la infancia. Del alojamiento institucional a los primeros pasos en el mercado inmobiliario

En Francia, la Asistencia Social a la Infancia (ASE) se ocupa de 138.000 niños o adolescentes en situación de riesgo, es decir, el 1,6% de los menores. Aunque los jóvenes entran en el dispositivo a edades muy diversas, todos deben salir de él a los 18 años, edad límite de la protección legal, o como máximo a los 21 años si obtienen un contrato de joven mayor. A partir de entonces, deben subvenir por si mismos a sus necesidades, incluido el alojamiento. Utilizando datos de la encuesta Elap (Estudio longitudinal sobre el acceso a la autonomía después del periodo de protección por l'ASE) y de entrevistas cualitativas, este artículo explora las modalidades y la experiencia en el plano residencial, después de la salida del marco institucional. Para estos jóvenes, que han sufrido a una edad temprana la precariedad de la vivienda, la salida programada de la institución es una nueva fuente de inseguridad residencial que genera estrés y angustia. Por otro lado, la entrada en el mercado inmobiliario se efectúa de manera desigual. Los que han aceptado conformarse al juego institucional y no han salido del circuito institucional, consiguen los mejores alojamientos y más tarde un alojamiento autónomo. Al contrario, los jóvenes que no logran o no desean obedecer a las limitaciones institucionales son los más expuestos a la precariedad residencial.

Translated by James Tovey